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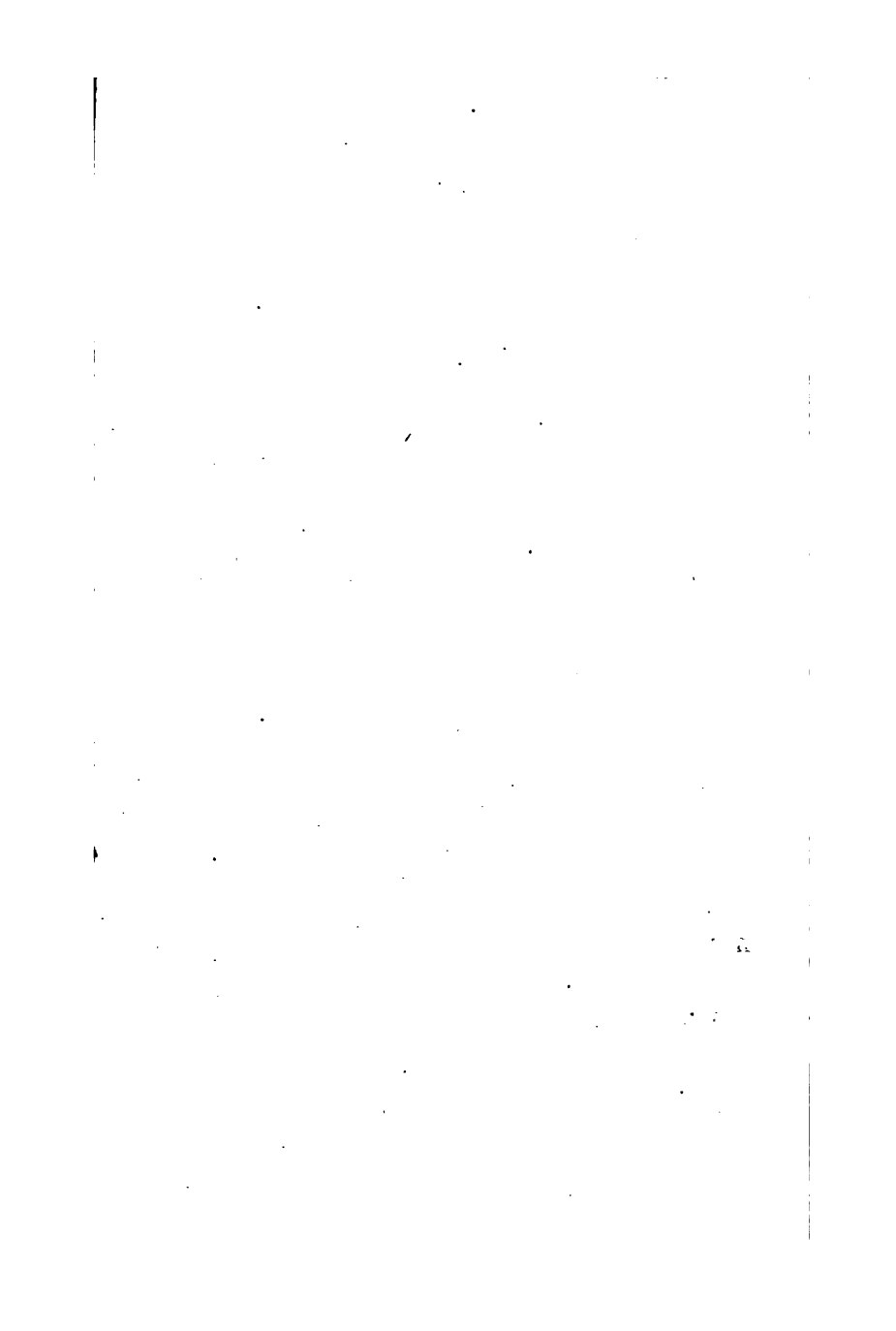
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THE
EVANGELIST







THE
EVANGELIST:
BEING
SKETCHES OF SERMONS
ON
VARIOUS SUBJECTS.

BY
SEVERAL PREACHERS.

LONDON:
RICHARD DAVIES, CONFERENCE OFFICES,
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PREFACE.

IN introducing their work to the public, the authors have very little to say concerning it. Their aim has been to produce a book that will assist a somewhat large and very deserving class of persons, who, after toiling six days for the bread that perishes, frequently give their Sabbath to the preaching of the word. Many of these self-denying men lack the means to provide themselves with a sufficient stock of well-matured discourses, and are in the habit of seeking help from others. But though unable to originate numerous connected trains of thought, they can adopt suggestive germs; and by the aid of their own stores, gathered from the Bible and other books, religious experience, daily observation, and commonsense views of life, amplify the ideas thus furnished, so as creditably and profitably to elucidate the great truths of revelation. Whether the present work will benefit men of this stamp, time and use must determine. The Sketches profess to be nothing more than outlines of thought.

Perhaps in no instance has there been an attempt to work out an idea fully; it being the writers' desire not to save the reader the labour of thinking for himself, but rather to stimulate him to that exercise. That the book may do good is the Authors' most fervent prayer.

March 2nd, 1868.

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THE EVANGELIST.

SKETCH I.

GOD'S LOVE AND GIFT.

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."—JOHN iii. 16.

THE love of God, as manifested in the gift of Christ to be the Redeemer of man, is the great theme of the Scriptures. The spirit of prophecy which dwelt in Moses, David, Isaiah, Daniel, &c., led them to speak of it. Nor has its interest been confined to human breasts; the angels have desired to look into it. Jesus, who had the nature that loved, and also that which was beloved, frequently discoursed of it. The text is by him, and is among the greatest sayings on record. It is the Gospel epitomised. It is one of the many pregnant sentences found in the Saviour's teachings, and which may be said to sparkle like jewels on a royal garment—nay, even to glow like the radiant orbs in the azure firmament. They may be regarded as bearing some such relation to knowledge as his miracles do to

power; they are striking, full, majestic, almost overwhelming. Let us examine the one before us, regarding it as an exposition of God's love. Of this love notice,

I. WHOM IT EMBRACED.—“The *world*.”

The term *world* bears several meanings in the Bible. Sometimes it is restricted to Judea and the neighbouring countries. Matt. iv. 8. In Luke ii. 1 it cannot embrace more than the Roman empire. In some instances it means only the people in a certain district. John xii. 19. Sometimes the entire visible creation. 1 Sam. ii. 8. Sometimes it is applied to duration, and simply expresses an indefinite period. Isa. xlv. 17. Again it means the pleasures, &c., of the present state of being. Matt. xvi. 26. In many instances it refers to the multitude of the carnal, whose thoughts are fixed on the life of earth. John xiv. 17, 22; xv. 18, 19. In others it means simply a great mass or quantity of any thing. James iii. 6. Sometimes, however, it includes the whole human race. John i. 29. 2 Cor. v. 19. 1 John ii. 2. The text is to be understood in this last sense. Here is seen the greatness of God's love. “God is love.” Love is in him in all its fulness and purity. It flows from him to his creatures in ten thousand forms. The most striking manifestation of it of which we have any knowledge, is that mentioned in the text. That is, not the love of complacency, but of pity. There was little in us to approve, but much to condemn. Our actions were altogether contrary to the character and mind of God. We were ungrateful for a noble existence, an exalted station, and glorious

prospects. Our nature had become corrupt. We were rebels against the righteous authority of God. It is easy to love the beautiful and good : an interesting child, an intelligent youth, a noble-hearted man, a virtuous and amiable woman. Not so the ignorant and depraved. When the higher stoops to help the lower, the love is seen to greater advantage. 2 Cor. viii. 9. This, too, is the testing of love.

II. IN WHAT MANNER IT WAS EXPRESSED.—“He so loved the world, that *he gave his only begotten Son.*”

Love being an active and generous principle, is known for its giving. True love is intelligent, as well as active and generous. It ascertains the best way of benefitting its objects, and adapts its measures to that end. Consider,

1. *The gift.* It was, (1.) A *person*. Not cattle, merchandise, money, a continent, a world, the material universe ; but one who had sympathies, sensibilities, &c. (2.) A *Divine* person. Older than the world. John i. 1, 2 ; xvii. 5, 24. Greater than the angels. Heb. i. 6. The Maker and Sustainer of all things. Col. i. 16, 17. (3.) The *Son*—“THE ONLY BEGOTTEN SON”—*of the Giver*. What heavy sorrows have been felt when a son has perished on the battle-field, or an only child has undertaken a mission to some barbarous tribe. Abraham stands foremost on the roll of great names because he gave Isaac to God. But how great the difference when God gives his Son for Abraham. How poignant was David's grief, when Joab and his companions slew Absalom. 2 Sam. xviii. 33. Yet Absalom was an undutiful son. Jesus had always done the will of his Father. John xvii. 24.

2. *The way in which he was given.*—Though this is not expressly alluded to in the text, it should be noticed. (1.) *High honour* had to be relinquished. Phil. ii. 6. 2 Cor. viii. 9. (2.) *Scenes of humiliation* had to be passed through. Phil. ii. 7. Temptation. Matt. iv. 1-10. Poverty. Matt. viii. 20. Reproach. Luke xxiii. 2. Insult. Matt. xxvii. 26-44. Death of great suffering and shame. Matt. xxvii. 46-50. Incarceration in the grave. The Lord of glory slain by his creatures, and then buried in the earth his own hands had made! Who can tell what love was necessary in order that Christ might thus suffer and die for man? Have you given up a son to death? If so, can you unfold to any one the grief you then felt? God's Son was as dear to him as yours was to you—perhaps dearer.

III. WHAT IT CONTEMPLATED.—“That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”

1. *To save from perishing.*—What is it to perish? The word must be understood according to the nature of the subject in connection with which it is used. When a man has lost his life by fire, water, cold, want, &c., he is said to have perished. His being, however, is not extinguished; he still exists in some form. To perish, in the sense of the text, is to suffer, not the loss of being, but of character, usefulness, enjoyment, hope, &c.—in a word, all the great ends for which existence was given, by being cast into hell. Men are liable to this perdition because of their sin. Sin exposes them to wrath, and finally cuts them off from God, leaving them eternally among outcasts. Christ saves men

from sin. By his death he has made atonement, so that God can pardon the rebels who repent. The Holy Spirit renews the nature of such, restoring them to God. They receive the Spirit of adoption. They shall never perish. The curse is taken away, and they are safe for ever. John x. 28.

2. *To give everlasting life.*—It is difficult for us to conceive what this life is. Types and illustrations are few, if not entirely wanting. When we attempt a description, it is negative rather than positive. We are satisfied, however, that it is a very desirable thing. The life of earth is regarded by many as the chief blessing. Job ii. 4. And yet it is a poor, bruised thing. Job xiv. 1, 2. It is passed amid tears, afflictions, and threatenings of death. The "life everlasting" of the Gospel is a widely different and vastly superior thing. Evil in every form is absent. No temptations from men or devils. No trials of mind or heart. No sickness, separations, disappointments, or death. What a happiness this alone would be to creatures circumstanced as we are in this world. Yet this exemption will be but a trifle compared with the aggregate of our heavenly joy. There will be the complete restoration of our nature, fellowship with God and all good spirits; indeed, the perfection of creature-life, and that to all eternity.

3. *To accomplish these objects in all who believe.*—This unfolds God's liberality. The whole course of the Divine procedure agrees with this. Mark xvi. 15. 1 Cor. xii. 7. The words—"Whosoever believeth," also define man's duty. We must coincide with God's arrangements. We must not be passive in the matter of our salvation. We must continue

"steadfast in the faith." Co-operating with the Divine goodness, we shall inherit eternal life. This life begins and is continued in faith, and will be perfected in glory. The life of heaven commences the moment we believe.

APPLICATION.

1. Remember you are by nature children of wrath, and in danger of perishing.

2. Recollect that you may be saved through Jesus. God loves you. Faith is the means of salvation. Do not overlook that point. Have you believed?

3. Spread the knowledge of this salvation among your fellow-men. You cannot do a greater thing for them than lead them to Christ.

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SKETCH II.

THE BLESSEDNESS OF GOD'S PEOPLE.

"Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound."—
PSALM lxxxix. 15.

THE utterances of the Christian minister are joyful. He tells of a pitying, sympathising, redeeming Saviour. He tells of Christ's gracious commission to his disciples—"Go ye, and teach all nations," &c.

This is a psalm of light and shade. No psalm or hymn all light could properly represent the church on earth. Our experience is influenced by

a loving Saviour and a tempting devil. The *holy* Jesus was the *tempted* Jesus. The psalmist, whoever he was, found his communings with God disturbed by earthly disquietudes.

From these words we learn—The world's ignorance; the Gospel's joys; and the church's blessings.

I. THE WORLD'S IGNORANCE.

Here human speculation is at variance with the Bible. Worldly philosophers say man is not fallen. Still they allow that all is not *quite right*; that disturbing forces, irregularities, and miseries occasionally agitate the surface of life: so that some help is needed. The truth is,

1. *Man knows not God nor the way to heaven.* He has a capacity for such knowledge, but he is depraved, dark, and dead; and by nature all are so. The chill of death is at the heart of the amiable, the charitable, the honest, and even the moral. Human reason, educated to the highest perfection, in minds strong and ripe, and accustomed to learned heights and depths, is lost in questions of moral and religious truth. Having this only, our own immortality is a speculation. We know not how God can be a just God and a Saviour; but the Gospel comes to our rescue, taking hold of the sinner, not by the throat, as a culprit, but by the hand, as one needing help; and speaking out fully to him of the precious blood of Jesus as the way to heaven. This is the true light. Not the star-light of mystic theology, or the glimmerings of natural philosophy; but the sun of truth, full-orbed.

2. *Man knows not true happiness.*—He seeks it, but it comes not. His conscience is a hell of mi-

sery, ever overbalancing earthly joys. He rushes to new scenes, but his misery accompanies him. He varies the cup of pleasure, but Conscience puts into it drops of wormwood and gall. At last he groans and cries for help. Jesus walks the angry billows, saying, "It is I; be not afraid;" and his fears are calmed. Jesus cleansed the temple in Jerusalem—a picture of the temple of the heart. He deposes, overthrows, and expels our misery-makers. He extinguishes our sin-fires, and fills us with love.

3. *Man knows not his peril.*—He is at sea, heedless of the chart that tells of sandbanks, shoals, and hidden rocks,—heedless of the sun or stars. He sleeps as if he were safe, when Death is beside his couch. He lingers, even when the avenger of blood is directly on his track, and while Mercy shouts, "Escape to the mountain." But the Gospel is charged with awakening thunder and fire. It tells of death, and hell, and many stripes.

4. *Man knows not his hereafter.*—He is afraid to die. Eternity is dark. Philosophy cannot help him. It knows no remedy for such a fear. It looks on death through a false medium. It talks of the manliness of dying hard, or of leaping at a venture. It tells of excited heroes and ignorant infidels dying like brutes. The dying saint, however, is supported against the fear of death by the personal assurances of immortality and eternal life. He may have no earthly comforts; death may come to him in his most cruel and dreaded form; like Stephen, he may be stoned to death: but he will see the opened heavens and the waiting Jesus.

II. THE GOSPEL'S JOYS.

All sounds are not joyful,—some are terrible. The sound of Sinai made Israel quake, and stand back. There are, however, many joyful sounds. David was a man of the fields; he knew the songs of nature as well as the trumpet of Jubilee. But the sound of the text is *the* joyful sound. How appropriate this article. The sound of power, riches, or mirth may be joyful; but such joy often ends in vexation. This is a trumpet of recall—a hymn of peace.

1. *It publishes the atonement.*—It is a finished, perfected atonement. Insulted justice is satisfied. The law is magnified. Jesus has taken away the sin of the world—tasted death for every man—redeemed us to God by his blood. The atonement cannot be improved by pains and penalties, or by prayers and tears. “By grace are ye saved;” not by works of righteousness; it is pure mercy; not baptism, confirmation, sacraments, or church-fellowship. Nothing but Christ. “We have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins.”

2. *It invites to the Gospel feast.*—It sets before us entertainments that are sumptuous, abundant, and various; and that will satisfy our spiritual desires and wants, and invigorate all the powers of our souls. All this is found in the gushing fountain, the rolling river, and the boundless ocean of redeeming love. “The Spirit and the bride say, Come,” &c.

3. *It proclaims liberty to the captive.*—There is no legal or spiritual impediment in the way of our liberty. Our redemption is finished. Justice can ask no more. We have freedom offered from the

tyranny of sin, the influence of the world, the sting of death, the dominion of the grave, and the displeasure of a sin-hating God.

“ To liberty assert your claim,
And urge the great Redeemer’s name.”

4. *It directs the Christian soldier to God’s armoury.*

There he may be clad with the whole armour of Christ, that he may withstand, and having done all stand. Satan will oppose, and, if possible, reduce him again to slavery. He will suggest that religion is disagreeable, unprofitable, difficult. “Faint, yet pursuing,” must be our watchword.

III. THE CHURCH’S BLESSINGS.

In this the spirit of the psalmist was far-seeing. It was a prophetic spirit, standing on the heights of inspiration, and surveying the privileges secured to the world under the fulness of the new dispensation. The Jews were blessed as a nation by the knowledge they had of these things. They were the only nation of moral value; others were servants and tributaries. England is blessed for knowing the joyful sound.

We know many things by sound. The child knows the sound of its mother’s voice. We know the Gospel to be joyful. Our own hearts being right, if what we hear does not make us joyful, we may well question whether it is the Gospel. Many admire the musical voice or the commanding eloquence of the speaker; but care nothing for the message. Neglected sermons will be terrible witnesses.

1. *Christians are blessed in their character.*—They are renewed, sanctified, and restored to favour. The Gospel is the trump of Jubilee. It is a Bethesda, with an ever-present angel troubling the cleansing waters. It just suits the guilty. See him stand, with his eyes on the cold earth, condemned by reason and religion; within are depravity and death. The Gospel finds him with his back turned on heaven, and pointing to the cross, it cries, "Look, and live!" It offers him reconciliation too. The Prodigal was pardoned outside his father's house. He might have had a servant's place; it was all he desired: but the father pardoned him fully and freely, fell on his neck, kissed him, took him home, clothed him, fed him, and rejoiced over him. Christianity has a noble witness in our experience; we *feel* "Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound."

2. *They are blessed in their condition.*—Noah was not more safe in the ark, nor Lot in the mountain, nor the man-slayer in the city of refuge. Rom. viii. 1. Retire, ye men in princely vestments, ye bearers of rule, ye wearers of crowns; and see the heirs of glory come up out of obscurity and shame, to be confessed and crowned.

3. *They are blessed in their enjoyments.*—They have felt "the joy of grief," and now feel the joy of hope. They cherish happy affections; they hold communion with God; they perform holy duties; anticipate a bright heaven.

APPLICATION.

1. It is blessed to know the Gospel in the *written revelation* of it.

2. It is more blessed to know it in the *public ministrations* of it.

3. It is most blessed to know it in the *inward application* of it. In this sense you may know it *now*.

Æ

SKETCH III.

AN INVITATION TO THE PROMISED LAND.

"And Moses said unto Hobab, the son of Raguel the Midianite, Moses' father in law, We are journeying unto the place of which the Lord said, I will give it you: come thou with us, and we will do thee good: for the Lord hath spoken good concerning Israel."—NUMBERS x. 29.

THESE words were spoken by Moses to Hobab, his brother-in-law, on the occasion of the departure of the children of Israel to the land of Canaan. But they have not ceased to be used, though Moses utters them no longer. Believers now, as they have been doing ever since the days of that leader of God's ancient people, are journeying to a better Canaan; and as there are many Hobabs, who hesitate to accompany them, they do not fail to say to them, "Come thou with us," &c.

This portion of Scripture points to a promised place; speaks of a journeying people; and offers a gracious invitation.

I. A PROMISED PLACE.—"I will give it you."
Canaan, the land promised to Israel, was in every

sense one worthy of recommendation. So Moses, it appears, regarded it. Nor does the Christian consider that heaven, the place promised to him, is less so.

1. *It is a land of plenty.*—Want, and even scarcity are unknown. The tree of life ever bears its delicious fruits, and the river of the water of life ever flows copiously and majestically.

“There generous fruits that never fail,
On trees immortal grow;
There rocks, and hills, and brooks, and vales,
With milk and honey flow.”

2. *It is a land of pleasure.*—And what pleasure!
(1.) Not hollow, but *substantial*. (2.) Not carnal, but *pure*. (3.) Not limited, but *various*. (4.) Not envied, but *admired*. (5.) Not broken, but *uninterrupted*.

3. *A land of wealth.*—Wealth which (1.) Renders not its possessor *sordid*. (2.) Always *retains* its *value*. (3.) Never *leaves* its owner.

4. *A land of health.*—Perhaps the word *relish* will define health. What is wealth without health? And what would be heaven without desire and capability for enjoying its pleasures and honours? And this heavenly relish shall never be destroyed—no, not even impaired.

5. *A land of honours.*—The honours enjoyed by its inhabitants are, (1.) Not semblances, but *realities*. (2.) Not unsuitable, but *becoming*. (3.) Not transitory, but *enduring*.

6. *A land of security.*—(1.) From disaffection of *unfaithful citizens*. (2.) From violent invasion by *outward enemies*.

II. A JOURNEYING PEOPLE.—“We are journeying.”

Jehovah had recently, in a miraculous manner, delivered the Israelites from galling bondage, and they were now on their way to a land long promised to them by their Lord. Believers in Jesus have escaped from a state of slavery worse than Israel ever knew, and are now journeying to a Canaan richer and more inviting than theirs. But they are aware that the successful prosecution of their journey depends much, if not entirely, upon the spirit they maintain, and the conduct they exhibit, while journeying. Hence,

1. *They exhibit a pilgrim's spirit.*—It is one of *strangeness*. They feel they are away from home, and are journeying to it; often saying, “Here we have no continuing city, but seek one to come;” and sometimes expressing their feelings by singing,

“I’m but a stranger here,
Heaven is my home;
Earth is a desert drear,
Heaven is my home;
Danger and sorrow stand
Round me on every hand;
Heaven is my Father-land,
Heaven is my home.”

2. *They observe a pilgrim's directions.*—These are —“Turn not to the right hand nor to the left.” They keep the right road, and the middle of it.

And, as a reward of their obedience,

3. *They are favoured with a pilgrim's encouragements.* (1.) Ever-growing convictions of the *desirableness* of their heavenly Canaan. (2.) Assuring *hopes* of reaching it. (3.) Occasional *Pisgah-prospects* of it.

III. A GRACIOUS INVITATION.—“Come thou with us,” &c.

Moses felt a deep and permanent interest in the welfare of Hobab, his kinsman, which prompted him to desire that he might be a sharer in his prospective pleasure. A more earnest desire, even, is felt by every enlightened Christian for the salvation of his fellow-men, which moves him to urge them to take those steps necessary to obtain it. This Christian invitation is prompted by,

1. *The peril of the invited*.—The good man sees that while the sinner is unsaved, he is in danger. He knows him to be a rebel against God; and that, ere long,

“Tempests of angry fire shall roll,
To blast the rebel worm,
And beat upon his naked soul
In one eternal storm.”

Hence he says to his neighbour or friend, “‘Come thou with us,’ if it be only for thine own safety’s sake.”

2. *The love of the inviter*.—His heart is *all* love. Selfishness has no place in it. And he cannot help saying,

“The love of Christ doth me constrain
To seek the wandering souls of men;
With cries, entreaties, tears to save,
To snatch them from a gaping grave.”

3. *The will of God*.—He reads that in one line of his holy book—“Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth,” 1 Tim. ii. 4.

In offering this invitation, the good man is not indifferent about compliance with it, but sincerely anxious to secure it; for this end he offers an INDUCEMENT: "We will do thee good," &c. The invited shall receive,

1. *Good at the hands of their fellow travellers.*—"We will do thee good." Our interest in your welfare shall not cease on your complying with our invitation, but shall be manifested throughout the whole of your journey. (1.) If *consistent conduct* be any aid to you, we will always exhibit it before you. (2.) If *Christian counsel* be called for, we will cheerfully impart it. (3.) If *Christian reproof* be required, we will not spare it. (4.) And you may at all times rely upon our *earnest prayers*.

¶But you shall receive what is infinitely better than all it is in our power to afford you—

2. *Good at the hands of your Leader.*—(1.) In perplexity he will *guide* you. (2.) In want he will *supply* you. (3.) In danger he will *protect* you. (4.) In sorrow he will *comfort* you. And of all this (and much more) you may be *certain*, for God has promised it: "The Lord hath *spoken* good."

APPLICATION.

1. You are all travellers; but where to—heaven or hell? Delay not to ascertain this.

2. Beware of the evil results of indifference to the invitations to Canaan. If once disregarded, they may never be repeated.

3. Pilgrims to heaven, be not discouraged by difficulties in the way. Soon the last will be encountered—Jordan passed—and Canaan gained.

SKETCH IV.

HELP FOR THE NEEDY.

"Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price."—ISAIAH lv. 1.

God has adapted his mercy to our condition and character. We have ample proof of this in the covenant he has made with us. He pardons, regenerates, delivers, instructs, defends, comforts, and strengthens. In this we see knowledge, power, faithfulness, and grace. That he is truly wishful to do us good, we cannot well doubt. The illustrations of his lovingkindness, as given in his word, are numerous, clear, and striking. The text is one of these illustrations. Consider,

I. THE CHARACTERS ADDRESSED.—They are "*thirsty*," and "*have no money*."

1. *They are thirsty*.—In the Bible the spiritual is frequently illustrated by figures derived from the material. By temperament, country, habits, and general education, the Jews were well fitted to receive impressions and lessons from nature. The same is true, to some extent, of all men. Our natural state is very appropriately compared to thirst. Thirst is, (1.) A *distressing sensation*. Man is miserable through sin. Isa. lvii. 20, 21. (2.) It has

its origin in the *requirements of our body*. Religion is to meet a real necessity of our nature, Sin is no unmeaning and imaginary thing; it is terribly real. (3.) It is *imperative in its demands*. It grows in intensity, and if not relieved, terminates fatally. Moral evil never exhausts itself; on the contrary, it is from bad to worse, until the soul sinks into the abyss of death.

2. *They are utterly impoverished.*—"No money." We are not merely needy, but helpless. John xv. 5. Jer. xiii. 23. We are altogether gone out of the way. Perceptions are cloudy, ideas distorted, thoughts foolish, desires vain, and will perversely set against God. There is about us a restlessness which indicates dissatisfaction and weakness. In our strivings after help we have had recourse to art, science, literature, philosophy, law, and a thousand forms of earth-born religion; but failure has been the invariable result. Each successive trial has but confirmed the Scripture doctrine that there is no help in us. Every one who has attempted in his own strength a thorough personal reform has soon found that all such efforts are futile. We have neither inward purity nor outward rectitude that can save us from wretchedness and death.

II. THE PROVISION ANNOUNCED.—"Come ye to the waters; buy and eat; buy wine and milk."

1. *Water.*—Nature's great beverage, and one of the necessities of life. In some parts of the East, at certain seasons, water was scarce. To the Jew an abundant supply of it was a matter of the first importance, and hence it came to be associated with fruitfulness, prosperity, plenty, and happiness.

Thus water is very fitly chosen to represent the blessings of Christ's kingdom, and to show the influence of his grace on the comfort, health, and life of man's soul. Salvation is a great gift unto many people, and it bestows joy wherever it is.

2. *Wine*.—Wine is esteemed for its cheering properties. Psa. civ. 15. Judges ix. 13. It revives and strengthens such as faint. The grace of Messiah is compared to wine. Prov. ix. 5. Isa. lvii. 15. Divine truth has imparted new life to thousands, by announcing pardon for those who were under condemnation, strength for such as were struggling with formidable enemies, infinite merit in the Saviour for such as were despairing over their unworthiness, the sympathy of all the pure and mighty natures of heaven for such as felt disconsolate; and by giving an assurance of final victory and glory to all who endure to the end. Isa. xl. 31.

3. *Milk*.—Milk is esteemed for its nutritious and restorative properties. In Scripture the term sometimes represents the elementary principles of Christian truth. Heb. v. 13. 1 Pet. ii. 2. Such is not its meaning, however, in the text; there it stands for a common and wholesome article of diet. Canaan was "a land flowing with milk and honey." Revealed truth is the nutriment of souls. This is the only food provided to sustain the inner life of man. Not the truth taught in science, art, poetry, &c.; but the truth "as it is in Jesus." This inspires the noblest sentiments, lays down the best rules of life, supplies the most exalted motives to action, opens the storehouse of the purest joys, and creates the most sublime characters found among

men. It originates and matures every thing God-like. St. Paul, Luther, Wesley, Whitefield, &c., for instance.

In the Gospel banquet we have a variety of good things—water, wine, and milk. The provision is suited to all: the infant of days and the man of years, the polished and the rude, the philosopher and the plebeian, the king and the beggar. It satisfies mind, heart, conscience, &c., in health and sickness, life and death.

III. THE INVITATION GIVEN.—“Come ye to the waters,” &c.

Consider three things pertaining to this invitation,—namely, purport, manner, and character.

1. *Purport*.—“Come”—“buy”—“eat.” The blessings we need are within our reach. John vi. 37; vii. 37. Efforts have to be made by us; we must “come.” Help is not in ourselves. We are like the prodigal,—away from home. We must return. The waters flow in their appropriate channels only; and if we wish to partake of them, we must leave the mountains of iniquity, where drought and barrenness dwell. Every sin must be forsaken. We must “buy” as well as come. Then we must put forth our hand and partake.

2. *Manner*.—“Ho”—“yea come.” (1.) It is *authoritative*. “Ho” is a call or command to stop. The salvation of the Gospel is by authority; it is a royal proclamation; it is a Divine commandment. Isa. lxi. 1. 1 Tim. i. 5. It is not a cunningly devised fable—a speculation—a human invention—a nostrum. It bears the seal of Divinity, and is full of the quality of power. Rom. i. 16. (2.) It is *re-*

assuring.—"Yea, come." There is love as well as law—tenderness as well as authority. He who is Lawgiver, and King, and Judge, is also your Saviour, and Brother, and Father. You need not fear. Thousands have come—some of the worst have come—men are constantly coming—all that come find life.

3. *Character.*—"Every one"—"without money and without price." Here we have great liberality. This liberality is expressed in a twofold form. The provision is, (1.) For "*every one*" who will come. The blessings of the Gospel are needed by all, prepared for all, and offered to all. Jesus loves all, died for all, pleads for all, strives with all, and is able to save all. He has given full proof of both willingness and ability to save every one, by gathering his people out of all classes of sinners. The scheme of redemption shows the disinterestedness of God. (2.) It is "*without money and without price.*" Religion does not injure us, by taking away our earthly good. It sanctions everything that is right. Blessings abound where it reigns. Peace, plenty, and progress are its gifts. 1 Tim. iv. 8. You need not bring gold, or silver, or precious stones, or goodly garments, or penances and fastings. "Believe, and live."

APPLICATION.

1. What a striking and painful exhibition we have of man's natural state!

2. What an astonishing manifestation of the Divine goodness we have in the Gospel!

3. What powerful inducements to come to Christ are set before us!

4. What a wide field of usefulness, and what weighty motives to work, does the whole subject furnish!

SKETCH V.

THE TRIAL OF FAITH.

"That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ."—1 PETER i. 7.

AFTER Christ's ascension, the one hundred and twenty who had espoused his religion, met together, and continued with one accord in prayer and supplication. The baptism of the Spirit came on them, and three thousand were pricked in their hearts. Persecution began to rage. Many sought the destruction of the cause; but the fury of foes was a benefit rather than an injury. The people perceived that their religion had a power in it that persecution could not weaken; a beauty that it could not dim; and a life that it could not destroy. Multitudes were induced to embrace it. Over them rolled the fearful waves of persecution. Sympathising with them, Peter wrote the letter before us. He reminds them of the lively hope unto which they have been begotten through the resurrection of Christ; tells them that in hope of their inheritance they can rejoice even now; and then adds the passage chosen as text. The doctrine here taught is: *That the trial of the Christian's faith results in great and enduring advantages.*

The text presents us with, religion; tested religion; tested religion rewarded.

I. THE CHRISTIAN'S RELIGION.

The term faith, as used in the text, must not be restricted to the act of believing, but may be understood as embracing religion in its various branches of belief, profession, and obedience.

1. *Belief*.—The object of faith is Christ, who demands the entire submission of the intellect and heart. Christ is Divine; that Divinity the Christian worships. Christ became incarnate; for that incarnation he is grateful. Christ made an atonement; in that atonement he trusts. The language of Scripture on the need of faith is decisive. "As Moses lifted up," &c. "God so loved the world," &c. "He that believeth on the Son shall not come into condemnation," &c.

2. *Profession*.—Coming to the altar of truth, the Christian takes a firm stand, and swears eternal allegiance to Christ. "I am determined to know nothing," &c.

"Here at thy cross, my dying Lord,
I lay my soul beneath thy love,—
Beneath the droppings of thy blood,
Jesus, nor shall it e'er remove."

3. *Obedience*.—Christ has given certain moral precepts, which are intended to govern our affections, thoughts, and actions. The only way in which we can show our faith in the principles of the Gospel is by obedience to its precepts. "If ye love me, keep my commandments." "As the body without the soul is dead," &c. Abraham was distinguished for his faith, but equally so for his obedience.

Such are some of the matters involved in the

term faith in the text. This faith is what Satan seeks to destroy. Christ said to Peter, "I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not."

II. THE CHRISTIAN'S RELIGION TESTED.

He does not expect, while sailing over life's sea, to find every wind and tide favourable. The ocean is sure to be rough at times. Dark clouds often envelope him. He has many starless nights; has frequently to battle with surging billows and stormy winds. Many things rise to test his religion.

1. *Affliction*.—(1.) *Personal affliction*. (2.) *Domestic afflictions*. Waywardness of children. Jacob: "All these things are against me," &c. David's son Absalom: "Oh Absalom," &c. Poverty. How painful to see the members of the household in need! Brother, are you patient in pain? Do you say, "Thy will be done?" Have you unshaken faith in the utterance, "All things work together for good?" If so, your faith stands the test.

2. *Temptation*.—(1.) To the *neglect of Christian duty*. Private prayer, domestic worship, perusal of the Scriptures, public worship, reproof of sin, the exercise of Christian charity. (2.) To the *commission of actual sin*. Worldly conformity, fleshly indulgence, ungovernable passion, daring blasphemy. Do you overcome these by flying to Jesus? If so, your faith stands the test.

3. *Persecution*.—Cain began the work of persecution nearly six thousand years ago. It has been in progress ever since, and has operated against the good, the wise, the honourable, the useful, and the true-hearted of every age and rank. Noah, who had obtained favour of the Lord—Job, the afflicted

and bereaved servant of God—Abraham, the friend of God—Joseph, the eminent example of virtue—Moses, the great lawgiver of Israel—Aaron, the high-priest—David, the poet-king—Isaiah, “the evangelical eagle”—Jeremiah, the weeping saint—Ezekiel, the profound prophet—Daniel, the dream-telling ruler—John, the forerunner of Jesus—yea, and Jesus himself, felt the force of persecution. Although he was innocent, holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners, yet he had to suffer. Nor did persecution cease when the Perfect One had been put to death, and when Christianity began its God-planned course. In every age since, the good have been annoyed by the bad. If we look at the first ages of Christianity, we may trace the footsteps of its messengers in blood. “They were stoned,” &c. And since their day, more than fifteen millions have been put to death for Christ’s sake.* The faith of these stood the test. Persecution continues to this hour. The finger of scorn is often pointed—the word of contempt often uttered; the good are scouted for being Christians. Sometimes the dearest ties of love have to be broken. But be not faint-hearted. Cease not to hold in veneration the sufferers of the past. They were the lights of the world—the benefactors of their race. Nothing could move them. O drink in their spirit, tread in their footsteps; and in a little while, thou shalt unite with them in chanting the *Te Deum* of the skies.

III. TESTED RELIGION REWARDED.

Consider,

* Paley’s Evidences.

1. *The nature of the reward.*—"Unto praise," &c. It shall receive, (1.) *Praise*. God shall give this by confessing it before assembled worlds. The good having stood the test, he will say, "Well done." (2.) *Honour*. God will honour those who, spite of affliction, temptation, &c., stand firm to his cause. (3.) *Glory*. Christ will crown it with glory. He will then reward and glorify all his workers.

2. *The time when it shall be given.*—"At the appearing of Jesus Christ." Christ will come to decide the destiny of every mortal. "Behold he cometh," &c.

1. Christian, live in a state of preparedness for Christ's second coming.

2. In trial be patient.

3. Do not rest satisfied without a religion that will stand the test.

4. Sinner, thou art without this faith. It is obtainable this hour.



SKETCH VI.

THE DIVINE PRESENCE PROMISED.

"As I was with Moses, so I will be with thee: I will not fail thee nor forsake thee."—JOSHUA i. 5.

THE necessities and emergencies of God's people have ever called forth his power and goodness.

Joshua was appointed to be the successor of Moses in the important office of leader of the Israelites to Canaan. He would no doubt be impressed with a sense of the responsibility resting upon him, when he looked back at the admirable qualifications of his predecessor for the office of leader, or glanced forward at the difficulties yet to be encountered before Israel were put in possession of their long-sought inheritance. But lest these thoughts should so affect his mind as to cause depression when courage was so much needed, the Lord makes a communication to him (Josh. i. 1-9), in which he renews his promise of assistance, and urges him to be "strong and very courageous;" assuring him, in the text, of his unfailing and seasonable presence.

Now these words, though uttered to Joshua fourteen hundred years before Christ, are as precious to the Christian living eighteen hundred years after Christ, as they were to him. He is not the leader of a great nation to a distant land; but, as a pilgrim to heaven, his need of the Divine presence is as urgent as Joshua's; and surely the interest which his great Father takes in him is not less than that which he took either in meek Moses or valiant Joshua. Entertaining these views, we do not hesitate to apply Jehovah's promise to Joshua to all who serve him with a perfect heart and a willing mind.

We propose to examine this promise; then to apply it.

I. EXAMINE THE PROMISE.

We will,

1. *Make enquiry respecting its Author.*—"I will be

with thee," &c. It may perhaps be proper to ask three questions respecting a promiser. (1.) *Did he mean it?* Some men's tongues run faster and farther than their intentions. But God means what he says, and never says more than he means. Deut. xxxii. 4. Ps. xxxi. 5. (2.) *Can he fulfil it?* Unforeseen circumstances may prevent men from doing what they sincerely meant to do. God's ability can never be impaired. Eph. i. 19; iii. 20. (3.) *Will he keep it?* Human promisers are often fickle, seek for an excuse in order to avoid fulfilling their promises, and unscrupulously violate their engagements; but "He is faithful that promised," Heb. x. 23. 1 Kings viii. 20. Ps. cxxxii. 11. Mic. vii. 20.

2. *Ascertain its nature.*—The Divine presence, naturally and necessarily, is everywhere, throughout high heaven, wide earth, and deep hell. Ps. cxxxix. 7-12. But this is not what was offered to Joshua. To have promised this would simply have been promising what could not but be given to him. It was a *special, favourable* presence. And say, O child of God, whether thy condition as "a stranger in a strange land," does not render it indispensable. (1.) The Christian's *loneliness* desires it. What is he without God to converse with, especially in times of trial, when, as is too often the case, all earthly friends have forsaken him and fled? (2.) The Christian's *ignorance* requires it. He needs a guide that knows the way. (3.) The Christian's *poverty* calls for it. His necessities are many and urgent, and none but God can or will supply them. (4.) The Christian's *danger* demands it. He has enemies on all hands; and

nothing but God's presence can put them to flight.

3. *Assure ourselves of its certainty.*—This may be seen, (1.) In the *language* in which it was expressed. Mark it: "I will be with thee; I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee!" What can be more expressive of certainty? Dr. Doddridge says that here is a string of negatives such as cannot be equalled in any other author. We are told that there are no less than five in the original: "I will *not* leave thee; I will *not* fail thee; I will *never, never, never* forsake thee!" Doubting Christian, wilt thou doubt after this? (2.) In the reference made to *individual experience*.—"As I was with Moses, *so* I will be with thee." "As I was with" him among the bulrushes in the Nile—in the court of Pharaoh—in Horeb—when he appeared before the burning bush—stood before Pharaoh and his magicians—led the people through the Red Sea—journeyed with them for forty long years in the wilderness—and died on mount Pisgah—"so I will be with thee"—as seasonably and as constantly.

II. APPLY THE PROMISE.

Joshua is not the only favoured recipient of this promise. Its blessings are enjoyed by all God's people—both the leaders and the led. Let us apply it, then,

1. *To the retired Christian.*—Affliction or some other cause, in your case, renders retirement necessary. God says, "I will be with thee" in thy chamber.

2. *To the active Christian.*—Public and active life has, (1.) Many *dangers*—of becoming worldly, vain, and distrustful: "I will be with thee" to preserve thy spirituality. (2.) Many *cares*—of business, po-

litics, and religion: "I will be with thee" to carry them all. 1 Peter v. 7.

3. *To the tried Christian.*—(1.) If tried in the *world*, "I will be with thee" to enable thee to retain thy steadfastness. (2.) If tried in the *family*, "I will be with thee" to give thee forbearance and meekness. (3.) If tried in the *church*, "I will be with thee" to give thee brotherly-kindness and prudence.

4. *To the aged Christian.*—Long life, much as it is desired, brings with it many and bitter sorrows. (1.) You may expect to be called to witness the *departure of many loved ones*: but in the trying hours "I will be with thee" to support thy mind. (2.) You will suffer from *pains* and *infirmities* incident to age (Eccl. xii. 2-5): but "I will be with thee" to cheer thee with the assurances of an eternal youth.

5. *To the dying Christian.*—(1.) Lest thy *fears* should bring thee into bondage, "I will be with thee" to inspire thee with confidence. Heb. ii. 15. (2.) In case the *valley be dark*, "I will be with thee" to brighten thy prospects. (3.) That thou mayest not be *solitary*, "I will be with thee" to cheer thee with my presence. Psal. xxiii. 4.

IMPROVEMENT.

1. Believer, rejoice in thy security and blessedness.

2. Sinner, bewail thy desolateness. Thou canst only look forward to trial and sorrow; and this trial and sorrow will be aggravated by the absence of Christ.

SKETCH VII.

THE PRAYER OF JABEZ.

“ And Jabez called on the God of Israel, saying, Oh that thou wouldest bless me indeed, and enlarge my coast, and that thine hand might be with me, and that thou wouldest keep me from evil, that it may not grieve me ! And God granted him that which he requested.”—1 CHRON. iv. 10.

SCRIPTURE history is somewhat brief, especially in its early stages. This could not arise from a lack of materials, for there were many worthy men and interesting events in olden time. This brevity shows the wisdom of God. The Bible had to be kept within moderate limits, lest plain men should be deterred from studying it. Still the chain of knowledge and piety had to be given. It was not necessary to elaborate every link at once. The development of God's covenant with man has been a work of many ages, everything having come in its own order. Jabez belongs to early times, and his history is remarkably concise. But though a small vessel, it is full of valuable treasure. Better things are said of him than can be said of some men whose memoirs swell to half-a-dozen volumes.

We will notice the object, the subject, and the character of Jabez's prayer.

I. THE OBJECT.—“ The God of Israel.”

1. *He is the Supreme Being.*—The only living and

true God. The Creator and Proprietor of all things. Full of wisdom, power, truth, and grace. Able to give all his creatures suitable blessings.

2. *He is viewed in his covenant relationship.*—He is the "God of Israel." In this covenant we have, (1.) Clear views of God's *character*. Nature tells us much about our Maker; but revelation a great deal more. It is only the latter which informs us that he is a gracious Being. (2.) The development of his *saving purpose*. The Jewish temple service set forth the principal features of God's redeeming scheme, and the prophets revived the people's hopes by pointing to the day of Christ. (3.) *Special privileges* secured to his followers. When Jabez lived, Israel had a past and a future. The past was full of monuments of Divine goodness: Egypt, the Red Sea, the forty years in the wilderness, &c. The future promised great blessings under Messiah. Zech. ix. 9.

II. THE SUBJECT.—"Oh that thou wouldst bless me indeed," &c.

He prayed,

1. *For a blessing.*—He wanted blessing truly. There are some things called blessings which are not such in reality. That which fully meets some requirement of our nature is a blessing indeed. God has many such things to give.

2. *For an enlargement of coast.*—It is right to pray for the necessities of life. Matt. vi. 11. We cannot live without bread, and we cannot get it without God's favour. We may not ask for luxuries, nor for wealth. If he give them, we must reckon

it so much above what he has stipulated for. He has engaged to give us sufficient. Matt. vi. 83.

3. *For the hand of God to be with him.*—The phrase “hand of God,” means, in Scripture, (1.) His purpose and executive power. Acts iv. 28-30. (2.) His providential goodness. Psa. civ. 28. (3.) His protecting power. John x. 28-29. (4.) His punishments and corrections. Judges ii. 15. Psa. xxxii. 4; xxxviii. 2. (5.) His sovereign disposal. Psa. xxxi. 15. (6.) His help. Neh. ii. 8. Psa. lxxiv. 11. (7.) His Spirit. Ezek. i. 3; xxxvii. 1. Perhaps Jabez meant the favour and help of God, that he might be guided in the right way, and be preserved unto eternal life.

4. *To be kept from evil.*—There is, (1.) *Physical* evil. This hurts the body. The instinct of self-preservation prompts us to strive against it. (2.) *Moral* evil. This injures the soul, by subjecting it to the flesh, separating it from God, and unfitting it for heaven. Sin both injures and grieves a good man. It is offensive to his nature

III. THE CHARACTER.

1. *It was short and pointed.*—The Bible fixes no standard for the length of our prayers. Still it contains several short ones, but not one that is very long. Heart-utterances are often brief and forceful. In true prayer we are more concerned about things than words; caring only for the latter in so far as they suit the former.

“Prayer is the simplest form of speech
That infant lips can try;
Prayer, the sublimest strains that reach
The Majesty on high.”

2. *It was humble.*—Jabez confessed his dependence on God. Riches and power belong to the Most High, but weakness and vanity to man. This is a lesson often difficult to learn; but having once mastered it, we have the key to knowledge and joy.

3. *It was fervent.*—We learn this from the first petition. Fervency is one of the qualities of the righteous man's effectual prayer. James v. 16. Generally it is an evidence of sincerity and true earnestness. With our eye on sin and hell, and Christ and heaven, how can we be indifferent? No wonder if we then come boldly to the throne of grace. Cold prayers are often a sign of ignorance, or of something worse.

4. *It was believing.*—He prayed to "the God of Israel;" thus showing his acceptance of the covenant made with Jacob, and his faith in its validity. In like manner we must come to God. Heb. xi. 6. Unbelief dishonours him. The greater our faith, the better he is pleased with us, and the more he gives us.

5. *It was successful.*—"God granted him that which he requested." One proper prayer avails much with God. He is so full of compassion that we have but to ask and have. Luke xi. 9, 10.

APPLICATION.

Have you begun to pray? If not, why? Begin at once. If you have, continue. We ought to be strong, and full, and ripe; for God is good to us.

SKETCH VIII.

SAFETY TO THE PERSECUTED

"And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake. But there shall not an hair of your head perish. In your patience possess ye your souls."—LUKE xxi. 17-19.

FROM the seventh to the thirty-sixth verses of this chapter, Jesus is predicting the destruction of Jerusalem. The text is contained in this prediction; but is as true now in its application to the two classes named in it—the wicked and the righteous—as it was when first uttered. In it the Christian is forewarned of persecution; encouraged amid it; and taught how to bear it.

I. THE CHRISTIAN FOREWARNED OF PERSECUTION.
—"And ye shall be hated," &c.

Here let us notice the persecutors and the persecuted.

1. *The persecutors.*—Thank God! not literally all men, but all men whose wickedness amounts to violent hatred of goodness. Such are influenced, (1.) By *ignorance*. In their minds there is no doubt much misapprehension respecting the true character of the righteous. John xvi. 3. Hypocrisy on the part of a few has done much toward fastening the stigma of insincerity and cant upon the many. And then, much of the excellence of the Christian is hidden—not vauntingly displayed, and can only

be known by close contact with him; but, as the wicked keep at the farthest possible distance from him, they must remain ignorant of it. "Father, forgive them," said the Saviour; "they know not what they do." Paul said that he persecuted the church ignorantly. (2.) By *envy*. But others understand the righteous well enough; and every time they behold their many shining qualities, gnash their teeth upon them. They cannot bear to see their superiority, and therefore labour to destroy it by persecution. Gal. iv. 29.

Persecutors of the righteous show themselves to be, (1.) *Cowardly*. Does it become a *man* to use coercive means towards those who think differently to himself? What was his reason given him for? (2.) *Cruel*. Persecution is the work of hell, where kindness is unknown. Wesley truthfully characterises persecutors in that verse—

"Into a world of ruffians sent,
I tread on hostile ground;
Wild human bears, on slaughter bent,
And ravening wolves, surround."

2. *The persecuted*.—Innumerable are the ways in which they are made to suffer; for hellish malignity makes men ingenious. (1.) They receive *bodily injury*. 1 Kings xix. 2. Jer. xxxviii. 4-6. (2.) Are deprived of *civil rights and privileges*. Ex. i. 8-14. (3.) Injured in their *estate*. (4.) Interrupted in their *religious exercises*. Dan. vi 8-17; iii. 8-23. (5.) Made the victims of *misrepresentation*. (6.) Robbed of their *reputation*.

II. THE CHRISTIAN ENCOURAGED AMID PERSECUTION.—"Not an hair of your head," &c.

There have been instances in which this promise has received literal fulfilment; *e. g.*, at the siege of Jerusalem. See Barnes on the text. But perhaps we are not warranted in always, or even generally, expecting such a fulfilment of it. In a spiritual sense, however, it is the Christian's privilege to realize it. Faith, love, hope, zeal, meekness, knowledge, resignation, &c., shall not suffer by persecution; but if altered at all by it, shall be strengthened and increased.

1. *Reason says it should be so.*—If the followers of Jesus were allowed to sustain spiritual injury, it would, (1.) *Dishonour God*. Would it not argue that he was either unable or unwilling to preserve them? (2.) *Jeopardize the believer's interest*. His future safety, as well as present peace, would be in danger. (3.) *Cause the wicked to triumph*. Psa. xiii. 4.

2. *Evidence says it is so.*—(1.) *God's word* declares it. Dan. iii. 25. 2 Cor. i. 10; iv. 9. 2 Tim. iii. 11. (2.) *Christian experience* testifies it. When did you come out of persecution's fires worse than you went in?

III. THE CHRISTIAN TAUGHT HOW TO BEAR PERSECUTION.—“In your patience,” &c.

Some expositors say that the word *patience* should be rendered *perseverance*, and translate the passage: “By perseverance ye shall preserve, or save, your souls.” Perhaps, however, this rendering does not materially improve the passage; for who is more likely to persevere amid trial than he who is patient under it? Here is,

1. *An implied danger.*—Of fainting under persecution. Alas! does not the history of some give

sad confirmation to the fact of the existence of this danger?

2. *A method stated to avert it.*—(1.) *Patience* is necessary to self-possession. *Fretfulness* and *wrath* not only render us *unchristian*, but *unsafe*, inasmuch as they are the greatest enemies to that mental composure and self-control indispensable in trial and danger. (2.) *Self-possession* contributes to safety. This gives a man to see his danger, and the best way to escape it. Such a knowledge will influence aright his thoughts, words, and actions; and when these are right, God will take care that “not a hair of his head shall perish.”

APPLICATION.

1. Be not surprised, children of God, at the world's treatment of you. Christ was hated by it: may not you expect to be? John xv. 18, 20.

2. But be composed amid your persecutions. So long as you are faithful, you will experience no more injury from them than he receives who enters the field of battle, but, after close engagement, retires without a wound or even a scar. “Not a hair,” &c.

3. Let the wicked learn the futility of persecuting the righteous. You must ask God's leave to harm them.



SKETCH IX.

CALLING UPON THE NAME OF THE LORD.

“Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.”—ROMANS x. 13.

THIS encouraging portion of holy writ is not only

found once or twice, but thrice on the sacred page. If any doctrinal truth was a favourite with inspired men, this probably was it. As first uttered by Joel, it was doubtless prophetic of the Gospel dispensation, and the blessings which should accompany it. Some expositors have considered the words as containing a prophetic declaration of the safety which should be experienced by the converts to Christianity at the destruction of Jerusalem. But the apostle employs the text to show the certitude of being saved from sin and the wrath to come, on condition that we scripturally call upon Christ; and language more explicit for this purpose could not have been employed. Let us consider it as setting forth the object, nature, and reward of prayer.

I. THE OBJECT OF PRAYER.—“The Lord.”

He is every way competent to render timely aid to his numerous and necessitous followers.

1. *He perfectly understands our condition.*—A physician cannot always cure his patient, because he is ignorant of his disease. God knows the wants and woes of all his creatures.

2. *He listens to our complaints.*—The poor and distressed cannot always persuade their more fortunate fellow-mortals to listen to their words of sorrow. But God needs no persuasion. He has an open ear to a distressing cry. “Before they call,” &c.

3. *He compassionates our distress.*

Providence, experience, and revelation demonstrate this. “Not willing that any should perish,” &c.

4. *Possesses ability to remove distress.*—The deeds and declarations of the Saviour while upon earth, prove this.

II. THE NATURE OF PRAYER.—“Whosoever shall call,” &c.

Prayer should be,

1. *Supplicatory.*—This is perhaps the leading idea which the apostle would inculcate in the word *call*. See the verses preceding the text. And those who pray in earnest for salvation will not be content with silent prayer, but will be constrained to offer it audibly. Earnestness makes man speak.

2. *Sincere.*—Nothing can justify insincerity: it is contrary to both reason and religion to expect that the man wanting in sincerity should receive an answer to his prayer. David said, “If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me.”

III. THE REWARD OF PRAYER.—Salvation: “Shall be saved.”

This salvation delivers from misery and imparts happiness.

1. *It is a salvation from misery.*—(1.) From the misery of *bondage*. A state of sin is a state of slavery. Christ only can knock off its fetters. But he *does* this to all who call upon him. (2.) The misery of *guilt*. The sinner feels himself under condemnation—justly so, as a wilful violator of a holy law. Christ takes all this away, and raises his spirits and lifts up his head.

2. *It is salvation into the enjoyment of happiness.*—Arising from, (1.) *Love*. Supreme; undying. (2.) *Obedience*. Consisting in doing the will of God

concerning the believer: not a part—the whole. To know you do this, what is it but the highest happiness? (3.) *Holiness*. Of thought, word, deed. And the happiness of this salvation shall be consummated in, (4.) *Heaven*.

APPLICATION.

1. Have you begun to call upon the Lord? Surely it is high time.

2. While you may be assured of salvation by calling upon the name of the Lord, you may be equally certain that it can be obtained in no other way.

3. You who have experienced this salvation, think not you can dispense with calling upon the name of the Lord. Perhaps it will be necessary for your latest breath to be spent in articulating his name and imploring his aid.

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SKETCH X.

HARDENING THE HEART.

“To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts.”
—HEBREWS iii. 15.

MAN requires admonishing relative to his spiritual interests. In his natural state he is averse to the things of God. His enmity is frequently strengthened by the influences which surround him. There is nothing about his character, conduct, situation,

and prospects to give him, as a sinner, satisfaction and comfort; and hence he does not like sober reflection, and pointed, searching self-examination. Conscience is apt to accuse him; and he feels under no temptation to disturb its slumbers. He often makes business, or pleasure, or others' treatment an excuse for non-attention to the affairs of his soul. In this he is greatly aided by Satan, who has designs on his welfare which are best promoted by ignorance and recklessness. God seeks to remove his indifference, and for this purpose gives him instructions and warnings which tend to life.

We remark,

I. GOD SPEAKS TO MAN.

He does this,

1. *Frequently*.—He begins with us in childhood. Our hearts are most easily impressed and moulded when young. Jesus took great interest in children when he was on earth, and we have no reason to suppose that he has taken less since he went to heaven. Who does not remember awakenings, aspirations, vows, &c., belonging to early days. Such things spring out of the visits of the Spirit. They continue, too, up to manhood, through the prime of life, and into the thick-coming shadows of old age. Not a day passes without God addressing us for our benefit. What a proof is this of his goodwill, and of our perverseness. Could all the kind calls given to us during a lifetime be presented to us, so as to produce a due impression on our minds, we should be greatly astonished at so much pains being taken with such wayward and obstinate creatures. God's nature, character, intentions, and

dealings merit better behaviour than we are in the habit of showing.

2. *Variously*.—His words are adapted to our nature and state, and take the form of warning, instruction, correction, and encouragement. Our susceptibilities are many and various. Our nature is a compound one—"body, soul, and spirit." We are intellectual, emotional, and moral. We are in relationship with heaven, earth, and hell. In addition to what is found in creation, God speaks to us by the facts of history, the dispensations of providence, the remonstrances of conscience, the ravages of death, the teachings of his ministers, the examples of his saints, the thousand voices of the Bible, and the gentle, yet powerful constraints of his Spirit. It will be a fearful thing if, after all this, we be found unsaved! Great will be our guilt, self-accusation, and anguish in the world of the lost.

3. *Graciously*.—In all his dealings with us God seeks our advantage. Everything is done to save us. Even when he threatens us with death, his design is gracious: it is to lead us to repentance, that we may escape the sinner's doom. Vindictiveness has no place in God's nature. Ezek. xxxiii. 11. He takes great pains with us, to remove our ignorance and obtuseness; and exercises forbearance that has no parallel in the doings of men.

II. WHEN GOD SPEAKS, HE DEMANDS OUR IMMEDIATE ATTENTION.—"To day," &c.

He does this,

1. *Because of the Speaker*.—He is greatest, wisest, kindest, and best. In every sense he is infinitely

superior to us. He is able to instruct us. He will do nothing for our hurt. We should count ourselves honoured by his regard. We are not worthy of his notice. Many of our fellow-men will scarcely stoop to speak to us on any account. It is a sin not to hearken to him. He is our Creator, Preserver, Sovereign, and Saviour. To disregard him is to disobey just and lawful authority.

2. *Because of the things spoken.*—When he speaks, it is about matters of importance. When he warns us, there is real danger. When he corrects us, it is for our good. When he invites us, it is to the best things,—to leave sin, obtain pardon, receive new hearts, enjoy peace, and go to heaven. What things can better deserve our immediate attention than these? Multitudes run through fire, water, war, pestilence, famine, &c., for things not half so important. Prov. iv. 7-13. 1 Tim. iv. 8.

3. *Because of the beings spoken to.*—We ought to consider our nature and life. (1.) We are *probationers*. God will soon cease from striving with us. Any given time may be the last. Matt xxiv. 44. 2 Cor. vi. 2. (2.) We are *moral* creatures. Obedience is essential to our well-being; without it we are aliens, anarchists, and outlaws. Less than God does not suffice for our nature. When we resist his Spirit, our heart is hardened, and there is less probability of our being saved. (3.) We are *immortal* beings. Our eternal all depends upon our taking heed unto what the Saviour says.

III. WE MAY HARDEN OUR HEARTS, AND DISREGARD GOD'S VOICE.

1. *Such power we unquestionably have.*—We are

free-agents. The commands, threatenings, promises, and reasonings of the Gospel imply this. God employs arguments and motives, but not compulsion. We are conscious of possessing this power of resistance. We remember seasons when we felt that we ought to do better than we were doing, but would not. The possession of this power is a very solemn affair; it involves serious responsibilities and tremendous issues.

2. *This power to resist God we frequently use.*—We are led to this by our fallen nature, the wiles of Satan, the evil conduct of our fellow-men, the abuse of Divine forbearance, wrong notions about sin, false views of God, erroneous opinions concerning religion, trifling with sacred subjects, and quenching the Spirit. Eccle. viii. 11. Isa. v. 20. Job xxi. 15.

IV. SUCH HARDENING OF THE HEART IS HIGHLY IMPROPER.

1. *It is dangerous.*—It may provoke the Lord to wrath. What fearful hazards he runs who puts off salvation till to-morrow! He risks his eternal all on a breath, and dares the Almighty to take that breath from him! We should take warning from the Jews, and be admonished by God's threatening. Prov. xxix. 1.

2. *It is foolish.*—It is slighting rich favours, laying the foundation for great sorrow and shame, and bringing certain destruction on our souls. What culprit would refuse life? Who but a fool would decline the services of a physician, when disease was sapping the foundations of the body?

3. *It is wicked.*—It is disobedience to lawful au-

thority. It is ingratitude to our chief Benefactor. It is self-destruction. We are God's property; and if we destroy ourselves, we sin. When we perish, God and our fellow-men suffer wrong.

APPLICATION.

1. We see that sin is a terrible thing. It has carried man far away from God, and rendered his conversion a matter of great difficulty.

2. We have a striking proof of our heavenly Father's kindness. Truly the Lord is good.

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SKETCH XI.

WALKING WITH GOD.

"And Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him."—GENESIS v. 24.

To be good among the good may be comparatively easy. To be good among the bad is attended with difficulty. Yet the latter is possible. Enoch's life gives proof of it. Piety, under such circumstances, is worthy of special commendation, and will receive greater reward. This was the case with Enoch's. "And Enoch walked with God," &c.

To stimulate you to like devotedness with him, let us consider Enoch's distinguished piety; and the reward it received.

I. ENOCH'S DISTINGUISHED PIETY.

In the Scriptures Enoch is described as pre-

eminently pious. In the text his piety is represented by the idea of companionship with God: "He *walked* with God." Let us enquire in what such pre-eminent piety consists; and how it distinguishes its possessor.

1. *In what does it consist?*—(1.) In the *most intimate acquaintance* with God. Such as can only be gained by devout familiarity with the Scriptures, incessant prayer, and unbroken meditation upon God. (2.) In the *most perfect reliance* upon God. He who walks with God leans upon the Divine arm for protection; looks to the Divine hand for supplies: and appeals to the Divine heart for sympathy. (3.) In the *most constant devotedness* to God. Of all he is and all he has: in imitating him, obeying him, and working for him. Not interrupted by sorrow, opposition, temptation, prosperity, or even sickness. He heartily joins his brethren in singing,

"Our souls and bodies we resign;
With joy we render thee
Our all; no longer ours, but thine,
To all eternity.

2. *How does it distinguish its possessor?*—(1. By the *honour* with which it invests him. Arising from intimate acquaintance with, and relationship to, heaven's King, earth's Ruler, hell's Controller, death's Conqueror, the world's Maker, the sinner's Saviour, and man's Judge. (2.) By the *privileges* it confers upon him. Protection. *Psa.* cxxi. 3. Supply. *Phil.* iv. 19. Sympathy. *Heb.* iv. 15. Guidance. *Psa.* xlviii. 4. Acknowledged relationship. *Mal.* iii. 17. In fact, all that infinite good

ness can suggest; infinite skill contrive; infinite power confer.

II. ENOCH'S DISTINGUISHED PIETY REWARDED.—
 "He was not," &c.

Paul says, "Enoch was translated," &c., Heb. xi. 5. The translation of Enoch was an extraordinary event, requiring such a purification of body and soul for heaven as rendered death and the resurrection unnecessary. Some think it occurred on a public and solemn occasion; and was doubtless intended no less for the accomplishment of special purposes suited to the times—as the reproof of the wicked, and giving confirmation to the doctrines which Enoch preached—than as a reward of the patriarch's distinguished piety. And thou, too, O faithful servant of Jehovah, shalt receive Enoch's change from earth to heaven, though it may not be experienced in the same miraculous manner.

1. *From what Enoch was taken.*—(1.) From *toil*. Bodily. Mental. Zealous Pauls cease to complain of "labours more abundant," and "the care of all the churches." (2.) From *suffering*. Arising from, physical derangement: Lazarus has left his pains and sores behind him. Persecution of enemies: David has ceased to demand of Saul why he should hunt him as a partridge upon the mountains. Faithlessness of friends: The psalmist speaks no more of wounds received in the house of his friend. Refractoriness of family: Undutiful sons grieve not the heart of aged Eli. Inconsistencies of professors: Paul no longer speaks in tears to the church of their ungodly walk. (3.) From *sin*. From being tempted to it: Peter will never feel its seductions

again. From committing it: David will fall foully no more. From witnessing it: Noah's righteous soul will never again be vexed by it; nor Jeremiah's eyes overflow with tears on beholding it.

2. *To what he was taken.*—(1.) *To rest.* Not the rest of indolence or incapacity; but the toil-worn, faithful labourer's rest. Rest consisting not in cessation from activity; but such as is experienced in varied and pleasurable employment. But no exercising care; no consuming grief; no bearing heavy burdens; no taking fatiguing journeys; no completing difficult tasks. (2.) *To happiness.* Arising from pure natures; honourable and agreeable company; heavenly employments; Divine intercourse. And augmented by the assurance of the eternal continuance—nay, progress—of these. (3.) *To holiness.* Consisting not only in the absence of sin, but even of the liability to it. Every faculty is under holy influences. *All* is holiness. Every thing reflects it; everything contributes to it.

IMPROVEMENT.

This subject may afford encouragement; administer reproof; and start enquiry.

1. Afford *encouragement.*—Are you called to live amongst the wicked? So was Enoch. And yet his piety flourished. So may yours.

2. Administer *reproof.*—The piety of some of you is far from a walking with God, and amounts to little more than formalism. Does not Enoch's shame you?

3. Start *enquiry.*—"In whose companionship do I walk?" If not in God's, then in Satan's. Walking with Satan, what can you expect but to be conducted to Satan's hell?

SKETCH XII.

THE GREAT QUESTION.

“Dost thou believe on the Son of God?”—**JOHN ix. 35.**

THE text was uttered in connection with the cure of the blind man who received his sight by washing at the pool of Siloam. This miracle very much perplexed the prejudiced Jews. A well-known wayside beggar, born blind, confessing Jesus, was a thing they did not understand. But their perplexity was increased when he not only confessed Christ, but vindicated him by arguments much more cogent and conclusive than might have been expected from one in his station of life. John ix. 24-33. The Jews could not answer him; so they cast him out. Jesus heard of his expulsion; and coming to him, proposed the enquiry of the text—“Dost thou believe,” &c. Excommunication from the Jewish church did not deprive him of the Saviour’s kind regard.

Let us consider the question of the text in relation to the object, nature, and subject of faith.

I. THE OBJECT OF FAITH.—“The Son of God.”

In the Gospel God is revealed to us in the person of Jesus Christ. That revelation is gracious in its character, contemplating the complete salvation of fallen humanity. We may view the Son of God,

1. *As our Immanuel.*—He is “the brightness of the Father’s glory, and the express image of his person;” the “Creator of all things, visible and invisible;” the Alpha and Omega; the Searcher of the heart; the Upholder of all things; the joy of angels; the Judge of all; the Dispenser of crowns.

2. *As our Covenantee.*—He stands pledged to give us pardon, peace, purity, and life. “Come unto me, all ye that labour,” &c. This is the certain and repeated testimony of his word.

3. *As our High Priest.*—He offered his own life as a ransom for our race, entered the gates of heaven, and is now interceding for us. Being full of sympathy, he hearkens to our sighs; bottles our tears; knows our injuries, wants, and temptations. There is nothing that God has promised, and man requires, for which Jesus does not plead.

4. *As our Conqueror.*—He has triumphed over sin, and will dethrone Satan and destroy death. He therefore appears as a crowned and enthroned Conqueror, encircled with a rainbow of glory. His name rings in the songs of the happy.

“Worthy the Lamb that died, they cry,
To be exalted thus.”

5. *As our Redeemer.*—He effected our reconciliation with an offended God; procured our liberty from the thralldom of sin; purchased for us the renewing influences of the Holy Spirit; and made provision for our reception to heaven. In accomplishing all this, he underwent great privations and sorrows; his agony being unequalled; his sweat bloody; his bed a cross; his pillow thorns; his cordials vinegar and gall; his executioners sol-

diers; their instruments whips, nails, hammers, and spears. The sun, the graves, the rocks, the temple's veil all testified to the unparalleled nature of his sufferings; and even his enemies smote their breasts in pangs of involuntary sympathy, and acknowledged him as the Son of God.

Surely the Lord Jesus, sustaining, as he does, such relationships to the sinner, deserves his fullest confidence.

We proceed to consider the question of the text in relation,

II. TO THE NATURE OF FAITH.—“Dost thou believe,” &c.

We will enquire what faith is; and ascertain what it does.

1. *Enquire what faith is.*—Perhaps faith may be defined as *trust*, consisting of credence, founded on evidence; and reliance, supported by the Holy Ghost. While it includes the strength of manhood, it does not exclude the simple confidence of childhood. In the Bereans (Acts. xvii. 11) we see the spirit of examination necessary to the possession of sound faith; and in the little child placed by Jesus amongst his disciples (Matt. xviii. 2-4), we see the spirit of reliance which should always accompany it. The latter of these is often more difficult of attainment than the former. It is comparatively easy to credit the Scripture testimony of Jesus, but not so easy to rely on him for salvation. Well might Jesus say, “If thou canst believe;” and wisely does the penitent cry, “Lord, help me!”

2. *Ascertain what faith does.*—It puts its possessor

in the enjoyment of, (1.) *Pardon*. Acts x. 43. (2.) *Regeneration*. Titus iii. 5, 6. (3.) *Hope*. Col. i. 27. (4.) *Strength for the difficulties of life*. Heb. xi. 33, 34. (5.) *Victory in the hour of death*. Psal. xxiii. 4. (6.) *Eternal life*. John iii. 36.

Faith being so excellent in its nature, and so beneficial in its exercise, if we would be safe and happy, how necessary it is that we possess it.

Consider the question of the text in relation,

III. TO THE SUBJECT OF FAITH.—“Dost thou,” &c.

The truths of the Gospel are for man; and seeing that the belief of them is of such importance to him, how necessary it is that we propose the question of the text.

1. *It is a personal question*.—It is *yours* and *mine*. Your neighbours and friends may believe; but dost thou?

2. *It is an important question*.—It is more important than questions of creeds and sacraments, generosity and good works, prayers and tears. Your title to heaven is in Christ alone.

3. *It is an answerable question*.—The infidel and scoffer answer it in the negative. The penitent hesitates. The Christian joyfully exclaims, “Lord, I believe.”

What answer dost thou give? God demands one now; and if refused at present, will *compel* it ere long. “Examine thyself, whether thou be in the faith.”

SKETCH XIII.

FAITHFULNESS REWARDED.

"Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life."—REVELATION ii. 10.

WHEN these words were uttered, tribulation was testing the faith of the saints at Smyrna. Living in times of doubt and disputation, they would need some testimony from their risen Lord, to confirm them in the faith. It was furnished them: "These things saith the first and the last, which was dead, and is alive." In their affliction they would sigh for some assurance of their Master's sympathies. It was given them: "I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty," &c. And as the fire of persecution gave promise of a yet fiercer flame, they would require some special inspiration to nerve them for endurance. It was supplied in the encouraging words of promise: "Be thou faithful," &c.

And to the church throughout all time do these words belong. The similarity of experience, aim, and obligation seen in Christians of every age, warrants us in regarding Scripture precept as binding upon all saints, and each legacy of promise as the heritage of every true believer.

The text presents to our attention a requirement and a reward.

I. A REQUIREMENT.—"Be thou faithful unto death."

Christian fidelity has reference to the trusts committed to the believer by Christ, and may be said to consist in diligence, constancy, and resignation.

1. *Diligence*.—Faithfulness demands that diligence be exercised, (1.) In *preserving personal piety*. The believer is a steward. To him are committed the true riches. These may be lost. In such loss is unfaithfulness. (2.) In *discharging Christian obligation*. "Freely ye have received, freely give." The church is the centre from which light should radiate. Possessing blessings, we become bound to bless. (3.) In *performing Christian service*. "Always abounding in the work of the Lord," should be every believer's motto. The works of the saints at Smyrna were recorded on high. Ceaseless activity, unwearied effort, are essential to true fidelity.

2. *Constancy*.—To the diligence of the steward the Christian must add the constancy of the soldier. (1.) In *bearing witness to the truth*. The Gospel has always had its enemies in the bold blasphemer and the false friend. But notwithstanding these, the Christian should bear his testimony to its excellence, in the actions of every-day life, and in the open confession of his lips. The doing of this often necessitates self-denial, inasmuch as it frequently endangers worldly interests, dissolves cherished companionships, attracts the jeers of ungodly men, and becomes the torch to kindle the fire of persecution. To be faithful under such circumstances requires all the nobility of the man, and all the constancy of the Christian. (2.) In *resisting every enemy*. "Be steadfast, unmoveable." It was Paul's joy that he had kept the

faith. The frowns of men should not drive, nor the entreaties of men draw, the Christian from his steadfastness. There must be no wavering—no shrinking, or treason will follow.

3. *Resignation*.—It does not become the saint to be stoical. A dogged determination to submit to what cannot be controlled, is very opposite to that resignation which recognizes a Divine hand in every trial. Submission must rule the spirit; the whispering murmur must be hushed; the rising complaint checked; and the soul, in full acquiescence, say, "It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good."

Christian faithfulness, as set forth in the text, possesses two characteristics.

1. *It is continual*.—"Unto death." To grow weary will only subject us to personal disgrace; and the harm done to the cause of Christ by recreancy, will outweigh all the good of the past life. Besides, God has provided all things necessary for perseverance.

2. *It is limited*.—"Unto death." This is a state of probation. Suffering and sorrow will not always be your lot. Soon shall the last trial have spent its bitterness, and the last storm have wasted its fury upon you, and it shall be said, "It is enough."

II. A REWARD.—"I will give thee a crown of life."

Crowns were sometimes the reward of great and noble deeds. Intrinsically they were of little worth; their value lay in the things which they represented. To the Christian the crown is an emblem of victory, honour, rank, possession.

1. *Victory*.—In the ancient race and combat, the successful one alone was crowned. In like manner, the heroism of the Christian soldier, and the perseverance of the Christian racer, shall be followed by certain triumph.

2. *Honour*.—Applause and honour constituted the solace of previous preparation, and the sweetness of accomplished victory. The constancy of the believer shall be rewarded, not with the honour paid by mean and mercenary men to questionable merit—itself a dishonour—but with the honour bestowed by the Divine Master, in sight of all the world, upon undisputed worth.

3. *Rank*.—Crowns belong to kings. A heavenly crown is the rightful possession of the faithful. Even now he is an heir; *then*, he becomes an inheritor. O the dignity of every humble disciple!

4. *Possession*.—A crown denotes the possession of authority and riches. The Christian has a prepared and heavenly kingdom, which yields what the possession of earthly kingdoms often fails to give—happiness—full, unfailing; peace—undisturbed, abiding; rest—unbroken; bliss—unspeakable.

But the superiority of the Christian's crown over that of the ancients is seen in its designation—"a crown of *life*." This indicates,

1. *That it is incapable of decay*.—The crowns of ancient heroes, as well as of modern kings, perish. They contain the principle of decay. But the Christian's crown contains the principle of life. Earthly honour may fade into disgrace, victory change into discomfiture, rank be reduced to servility, position relapse into indigence; but the

Christian's inheritance is unfading—his glory can know no diminution—it shall “shine as the stars for ever and ever.”

2. *That it shall be eternally retained.*—Earthly diadems are hereditary, but the heavenly one enriches its possessor for ever. Death robs not the glorified saint of his crown and kingdom. Once crowned, he is always crowned.

APPLICATION.

From this subject we may learn three lessons.

1. A lesson of *encouragement*.—“He is faithful that hath promised.” The crown is certain if the requirement be fulfilled. And every trial, faithfully borne, adds a gem to it.

2. A lesson of *humility*.—It is not our endurance here that merits the reward bestowed. After all the believer's fidelity, it is a *gift* from the Master. Christ purchased it for us.

3. A lesson of *warning*.—If the diligent steward and the constant witness shall be rewarded with life, what shall be the portion of the unfaithful servant, and of him who has borne false witness? Shall not the punishment be proportionate to the blessing?



SKETCH XIV.

ANXIOUS THOUGHT.

“Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on.”—MATTHEW vi. 25.

WHEN the Saviour uttered the text and context, he

was probably seated on a hill-side, surrounded by his disciples and others, with the corn-fields spread out before them, the flowers blooming at their feet, and the birds flitting to and fro, and indulging in their carol of praise. As the Prince of instructors, Jesus wished to make the occasion one of benefit to his hearers. The design of his discourse was to eradicate anxious cares and fears, and to lead his hearers to faith in God. Now, as then, the human heart is inclined to love and seek the visible in preference to the invisible. Our heavenly Father has long been seeking, by line upon line, to deliver us from this earthward tendency.

Let us notice the nature, causes, and consequences of worldly anxiety.

I. THE NATURE OF WORLDLY ANXIETY.

The Saviour does not condemn prudent forecast, nor a humble desire to escape danger, and to secure the blessings of the present life. Prov. xxii. 3. Our plans should be laid, and our efforts put forth, with resignation to the Divine will, and under a deep and lasting conviction that we may not be permitted to realize our wishes. The anxiety condemned by Jesus is that fretting, desponding state of mind which causes us to act as if God either cannot or will not take sufficient care of us; and as if our chafing and strife can interrupt the order of nature, and change the Divine operations. What God appoints is best. To what we cannot prevent or alter we must patiently submit; feeling assured that the Judge of all the earth will do right; and saying, "It is the Lord: let him do what seemeth him good."

II. THE CAUSES OF WORLDLY ANXIETY.

Two principal causes may be mentioned.

1. *Subjection to our appetites.*—Meats and drinks cause thousands of hearts to be filled with care and fear. It is not wrong to desire enough of these things to make life comfortable. 1 Tim. v. 8. Some give themselves up to the work of cultivating and gratifying the appetite for food; living to eat, instead of eating to live; and forgetting that

“Man wants but little here below,
Nor wants that little long.”

Drinks also exercise great influence over many. Forsaking the simple beverages of nature, they seek stimulating liquors. These cause expense, produce poverty, create unnatural cravings, and frequently engender disease. Prov. xxiii. 20, 21.

2. *An unsanctified state of mind.*—Allusion is made to this in the text and context, verses 25-32. It is seen in, (1.) *Love of personal appearance.* It is difficult to lay down rules for dress. Neatness is commendable. We should have regard to our station in life; keep within the limits of our income; and let our apparel be such as corresponds with our Christian profession. 1 Tim. ii. 9. (2.) *Greediness for gold.* This sin ensnares many victims. It does great mischief in the church. What a strange association of words—“covetous Christian!” We never speak of a lying Christian, or a drunken one, and why should we have to speak of a covetous one? Col. iii. 5. (3.) *Distrust of Divine Providence.* If we saw the children of wise and affectionate parents behaving towards them as many of us do towards God, should we not reckon them seriously defec-

tive in either mind or heart? Many who profess belief in the wisdom, power, goodness, and faithfulness of God, are still found toiling and chafing as though all had to be done by their own hands. Such show that they are strangers to the repose which true faith brings.

III. THE CONSEQUENCES OF WORLDLY ANXIETY.

1. *It diverts the mind from proper objects.*—Most men have endured regret for sin, desired religion, felt the stings of conscience, and formed resolutions of amendment. But when these things have to do with a soul under the influence of anxious care, there is but little prospect of good results.

2. *It cramps the intellectual powers.*—When the body monopolizes all the time, the mind is neglected and robbed. When the flesh rules, the spirit languishes in chains, and becomes sickly and feeble.

3. *It frets and wears away the bodily health.*—“Godliness with contentment is great gain.” Religion tends to long life. Some men are in such haste to be rich, to push business, to keep up appearances, and to make sure of the present world, that they die in what should be the prime of their days, or else reason becomes a wreck.

4. *It prevents growth in grace.*—If the cares, honours, riches, and pleasures of the world occupy our thoughts, religion must be cast into the background, or else have no place at all with us. We “cannot serve two masters.” “His servants ye are to whom ye obey,” Rom. vi. 16.

APPLICATION.

1. Let us submit to God.

2. Let us use God's gifts for his glory.

3. Let us remember the perishable nature of the things which occasion anxiety in the present life.

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SKETCH XV.

THE SURE FOUNDATION.

"Therefore thus saith the Lord God, Behold I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste."—ISAIAH xxviii. 16.

CHRIST is the central truth of revelation. To the inspired writers he is "all in all;" and from their manner of speaking of his person, character, work, and the priceless blessings he has procured, it is evident that they wish to make him "all in all" to us. In order to represent him, they employ the most striking objects as metaphors: "the star," "the morning star," "the day star," "the sun," "the rose of Sharon," "balm of Gilead," "plant of renown," "tree of life," "a rock," "a stone," "a foundation." "Behold, I lay," &c. That the prophecy of which the text is part refers to Christ, is generally admitted. The figure of a stone is frequently employed in God's word. Gen. xlix. 24. Psa. cxviii. 22. Matt. xxi. 42. Acts iv. 11.

The text teaches that there is a foundation; and that it is man's privilege to build thereon.

Let us notice,

I. THE FOUNDATION LAID IN ZION.—“Behold, I lay,” &c.

Every part of this metaphor is expressive of some important feature of Christ's great work. This foundation is called,

1. *A stone*.—This emblemizes, (1.) Christ's *strength*. This must have been great, seeing he bore the sins of the world. “Mighty to save.” (2.) Christ's *stability*. The basis on which Christianity is built cannot be moved. Fearful floods may dash against it, but they cannot destroy it; stormy winds may sweep over it, but they cannot move it.

2. *A tried stone*.—It has been tried, (1.) With the view of effecting its *destruction*. Jesus was assailed by the devil, and is still reproached and despised by the ungodly. (2.) For the purpose of obtaining *support* from it. Penitents have built on him for salvation. The church, individually and collectively, has placed all her hopes upon him, and has ever realised them to the fullest extent.

3. *A precious stone*.—(1.) Declared to be such by the *Father*. Isa. xlii. 1. Matt. iii. 17. (2.) Found to be such by the *penitent*. He pardons, renews, and adopts him. Gal. iv. 4, 5. (3.) Rejoiced in as such by the *believer*. He sweetens his trials; lightens his burdens; supplies his needs; succours him in bereavements; and supports him in death.

4. *A corner stone*.—A corner stone unites the different parts of a building, and gives strength and beauty to it. All saints meet and form in Christ one glorious temple. Eph. ii. 20-22 He unites them, (1.) To *himself* and the *Father*. John

xvii 21-23. (2.) *To one another.* Eph. iv. 15, 16.

5. *A sure Foundation.*—God has laid it. Hence the forces of earth and hell have always united their energies against it in vain.

II. THE PRIVILEGE OF BUILDING ON THIS FOUNDATION.—“He that believeth,” &c.

Man needed a foundation. Rom. v. 6. There was nothing in himself, or in his performances, on which he could safely rely. Rom. iii. 20. Tit. iii. 5. Heb. x. 4. Such a foundation as he required, the infinite goodness of God supplied; and it is his greatest privilege to build thereon. Let us notice,

1. *The nature of this privilege.*—“Shall not make haste.” Paul says, “Not be ashamed,” Rom. ix. 33. Peter, “Not be confounded,” 1 Pet. ii. 6. It is said that the Hebrew word means to haste, to be afraid, to flee. The idea is taken from a man, who, finding the foundation of his habitation insecure, flees to a place of safety. Isaiah teaches that the foundation laid by Jehovah is so firm, that the man who builds thereon has no need to fear any storm; hence by one the words are translated, “He that trusteth, shall not flee away in alarm.” The believer is safe, (1.) Amid the *temptations of Satan.* Eph. vi. 11, 16. (2.) The *opposition of the world.* Deut. xxxiii. 27. (3.) The *attack of death.* 2 Tim. i. 10. (4.) The *terrors of judgment.* Matt. xxv. 34-40. See Matt. vii. 24, 25.

2. *The means by which it is realized.*—Faith. “He that believeth.” Christ is worthy of our confidence. And besides, does it not seem reasonable that we should yield him it before we can expect to receive such inestimable blessings from him? This confidence should be hearty, unwavering, abiding.

My brother, embrace the privilege of building on Christ. The foundation has been laid for *thee*. O take the resolve :

"Is Christ designed a corner stone,
On which to build our hopes upon?
I'll make him my foundation too,
Nor fear what earth or hell can do."

Build on Christ alone. Some build on Christ and self—their works, their prayers, &c.

Perhaps you have not built. Then you are dead, accursed, in danger of being damned. If you do not build here, you shall be "ashamed," "confounded," "make haste;" at death, sink to the pit; and at the great day, cry in agony, "Rocks and mountains, fall on us!" You may begin to build now. You may rear a glorious superstructure. Build daily. And in a little while, the great Father will say, "It is enough!"



SKETCH XVI.

BEFORE THE THRONE.

"Therefore are they before the throne of God."—REVELATION vii. 15.

SUCH is the account of the redeemed given in the last book of Scripture. Many of the blessed beings referred to had laid down their lives for the testimony of Jesus, while all had excelled in real goodness. They had washed at one fountain, and now

they sing the same song. Their sorrows are passed. They confess no sins. Still they are creatures, consequently dependent. But their wants are anticipated; and so prayer is needless. Their employment is that of praising; and their condition one of unspeakable honour and happiness.

Concerning these blessed beings, let us enquire whence they came; where they are; and how they attained to their present position.

I. WHENCE THEY CAME.

1. *Originally, out of sin.*—"They had washed their robes," &c. Many of them lived long under its influence, and all were held captive by its power and degraded by its guilt. The remembrance of their pardoned sin makes their songs so sweet in heaven.

2. *Subsequently, out of great tribulation.*—This subject throws back our thoughts to the martyr ages of the church. God's people have been a suffering people, and are so still. They suffer from, (1.) *Poverty.* Lazarus. (2.) *Affliction.* Job. (3.) *Temptation.* Joseph. (4.) *Persecution.* Jeremiah, Daniel, Paul and Silas. (5.) *Bereavement.* Mary and Martha. But God mercifully overrules the sufferings of his people for his own glory. We have a cross in our lot, and a thorn in our flesh; but they exercise our graces, and drive us to Jesus. We must be tried to be approved. All the saints rejoice, but many rejoice in the midst of tribulation.

II. WHERE THEY ARE.—"Before the throne," &c. They have left their earthly dwelling. We miss

them. But they have gone to a higher and better home. "They are before the throne of God." What does this denote?

1. *Honour*.—Who has not thought it would be an unspeakable privilege even to look upon heaven; but to be before the throne of God, is not the thought enrapturing?

2. *Purity*.—Those before the throne are in white raiment. White raiment, with the ancients, was an emblem of purity and victory. It was said of those in Sardis who had not defiled their garments, "They shall walk with me in white, for they are worthy." Heaven is the scene of unswerving holiness.

3. *Safety*.—God's loving eye is ever upon them. No enemy can reach them, for his glory covers them as a tent. They are far removed from every source of danger.

4. *Intercourse*.—The pure in heart shall see God. Their fellowship shall be not merely with glorified saints and angels, but with God and the Lamb. "Beloved, now are we the sons of God," &c., 1 John iii. 2.

5. *Perpetuity*.—Jesus shall be their everlasting Saviour. "They shall serve him day and night in his temple." "They shall go out no more for ever." "The Lamb shall lead them to fountains of living water."

What a contrast between this and their former state! Heads once bowed with sorrow are now crowned with glory; tongues once complaining of hardship and want are now praising the Lamb; hearts once full of corruption and sorrow now glow with happiness, and rejoice in spotless purity.

III. HOW THEY ATTAINED TO THEIR PRESENT POSITION.—“They washed their robes,” &c.

1. *Their present honourable position is not due to their own merit.*—(1.) Not to their *innocence*. They acknowledge they were guilty. (2.) Not to their *virtues*. It is true they have been able to manifest their fidelity in the greatest extremities; but it was by the power of Divine grace. (3.) Not to their *religious performances*.—Observance of creeds, attendance upon ordinances.

2. *But they owe their promotion to the meritorious death of Jesus.*—The slaying of the ancient Jewish sacrifices cleansed from ceremonial defilement; the offering of Christ saved from sin of every hue. The death of Christ was not a mere martyrdom; it was an atonement for sin. And those who have experienced its saving efficacy on earth, and been dignified by its exalting power in heaven, are a multitude which no man can number. What a glorious community they form! How desirable to be with them!

APPLICATION.

1. Behold, in the scene with which the text presents us, the power of the cross.

2. Let us away to the fountain, and wash our defiled garments. The people in heaven are in white robes; and before we can join them, we must be made pure. “Without holiness no man can see the Lord.” “Be ye holy.”

SKETCH XVII.

THE UNCERTAINTY OF THE FUTURE.

"Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow."—
JAMES iv. 14.

PRESUMPTION regarding the future is an error and fault of frequent occurrence in human conduct. There are but few, if any, who entirely avoid it; while there are many who indulge in it to an extent which must be offensive to the Lord of all. With nothing to depend upon but the attenuated thread of life, men are putting off till a more convenient season the weightiest matters of time and eternity. The Bible gives us many lessons of instruction on this subject. The text is a very solemn admonition; and if we be wise, we shall attend to it, and form our resolutions and practice accordingly.

Let us consider the mysterious uncertainty which hangs around future events, and the influence which this uncertainty should exercise over our minds.

I. THE MYSTERIOUS UNCERTAINTY WHICH HANGS AROUND FUTURE EVENTS.—"Ye know not," &c.

We will view this uncertainty in relation to the continuance of the Gospel dispensation; the duration of our national and family mercies; and the termination of our mortal existence.

1. *The continuance of the Gospel dispensation.*—

Certain things are to happen before the end of the world (2 Thess. ii. 3-12); but concerning the time of the Lord's coming, human speculation is completely at fault. Mark xiii. 32. The Judge will come "like a thief in the night."

2. *The duration of our national and family mercies.*

—As a nation, we have been long and greatly favoured. We have also sinned greatly. God punishes guilty communities, as well as guilty individuals. Where are the power, wealth, glory, and renown of ancient Nineveh, Babylon, Carthage, and Rome? Jehovah has sometimes given us a few drops from the cup of his wrath. The pestilence has smitten us, and famine has threatened our shores. National morality, of the true Scriptural type, is the best pledge of national prosperity and greatness. Failing in this, we know not what may be on the morrow.

Our family mercies are likewise subject to uncertainty. The family is a kingdom in miniature: it has its laws, its rewards, and its punishments; its times of prosperity, and its seasons of trial. There are a thousand circumstances, any one of which may rob us of our joys.

3. *The termination of our mortal existence.*—The uncertain nature of our earthly tenure may be argued from, (1.) *The character of human life.* St. James asks, "For what is your life?" and answers, "It is even a vapour"—smoke—"that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away." Like a vapour, it is *swift*. Job. ix. 25, 26. In the morning of our days, we think time very slow; in the evening, the past seems but a dream. Life is also *frail*—unsubstantial as smoke, perishable as grass,

and short-lived as the flower of the field. 1 Pet. i. 24. Job xiv. 2. (2.) *The advent of Death.* We know not when, nor where, nor how he will assail us. We are certain that every one must fall by his hand; but beyond this, all is mystery.

II. THE INFLUENCE WHICH THIS UNCERTAINTY SHOULD EXERCISE OVER OUR MINDS.

It should,

1. *Drive the sinner to Christ.*—To-morrow may close your probation. That would be a very momentous event. You wish, perhaps, to possess a house on earth, which you may call yours. Should you not desire and seek one in heaven? Do you insure your life against affliction, or provide for your family in case of your death? Should not your soul be made secure? You carefully guard your health; and when it fails, you seek the aid of the physician, to restore it. Do you consider that no care is required on behalf of your spirit? Only Christ can make you secure; and him you ought to seek at once. Matt. xxiv. 44.

2. *Stimulate the saint to the faithful discharge of his duties.*—(1.) *To maintain your religion in vigorous life.* (2.) *To moderate your desire for earthly things.* 1 Tim. vi. 7, 8. Col. iii. 2. 1 John ii. 15-17. (8.) *To use your time wisely.* This you are recommended to redeem. Eph. v. 16, You should be constantly engaged in doing good. Eccle. ix. 10.

“No room for mirth or trifling here,
For worldly hope, or worldly fear,
If life so soon be gone;
If now the Judge be at the door,
And all mankind must stand before
The high, the great white throne.”

SKETCH XVIII.

A DIVINE VISIT.

"God hath visited his people."—LUKE vii. 16.

It was said of the Saviour, "He went about doing good." This statement received many illustrations in his ministry. The context affords one. Approaching the city of Nain, he met a funeral procession, bearing to their last home the remains of a young man—"the only son of his mother, and she was a widow." The scene moved his sympathies, and induced him to exert his sovereign power for the comfort of the bereaved mother. Ver. 12-15. The result of this miracle is recorded in the verse in which the text is found:—"And there came a great fear on all; and they glorified God, saying, That a great prophet is risen up among us; and, That God hath visited his people." What the people expressed under the influence of excitement, is an all-important fact, full of deep interest to all nations, and to every generation.

Leaving the narrative, let us consider the nature and design of Christ's visit to our world.

I. THE NATURE OF CHRIST'S VISIT.

It was the visit of a Divine, humble, and benevolent Person.

1. *It was the visit of a Divine Person.*—(1.) Christ possesses Divine attributes. He is eternal. Isa. ix. 6.

SKETCH XVIII.

John i. 1. Omnipresent. Matt. xviii. 20. Omnipotent. Rev. i. 8. Omniscient. John xvi. 30. Unchangeable. Heb. i. 12. (2.) Christ *performs Divine works*. He created all things. Col. i. 16. Redeemed all men. Rev. v. 9. Preserves all things. Col. i. 17. Will judge the world. 2 Cor. v. 10. (2.) Receives *Divine honours*. From angels. Heb. i. 6. Rev. v. 11-14. From men. Acts vii. 59.

2. *It was the visit of a condescending Person*.—The condescension of Christ, (1.) Consisted in the union of the *Divine nature* with the *human*. John i. 14. This is a doctrine to be received by our faith, and not comprehended by our reason; yet evidence in support of it was furnished by almost every incident in the life of the Redeemer. (2.) Was carried to the *lowest conceivable degree*. Phil. ii. 7. Heb. ii. 16. He not merely passed by the orders of archangels and angels, but became acquainted with the nature of man in its manifold weaknesses and wants. Heb. iv. 15.

3. *It was the visit of a benevolent Person*.—His benevolence was seen, (1.) In his *life*. His associates, discourses, and miracles afforded abundant proof of it. (2.) In his *death*. The incidents immediately preceding, the sufferings attending, and the results following this event, testified it.

II. THE DESIGN OF CHRIST'S VISIT.

It was not purposeless; but had in view the accomplishment of the noblest objects which could be proposed. It was made,

1. *To atone*.—Man was in a state of rebellion; the death of Christ furnished a basis for the exercise of mercy, by satisfying the demands of public

justice. 1 John ii. 2. Heb. ix. 14. This having been done, pardon is placed within the reach of all; in admiration of which the poet has sung :

“ Survey the wondrous cure :
And at each step, let higher wonder rise !
Pardon for infinite offence ! And pardon
Through means that speak its value infinite !
A pardon bought with blood—with blood Divine—
With blood Divine of Him I made my foe !
Persisted to provoke, though woo'd and aw'd,
Blest and chastised, a flagrant rebel still—
A rebel, 'midst the thunders of his throne !
Nor I alone ! a rebel universe ;
My species up in arms ; not one exempt.
Yet for the foulest of the foul he dies.”

2. *To renew.*—Human nature, being corrupt, needed renewing. This renewal is accomplished by Christ; and produces hatred to sin, resemblance to Jesus, and delight in God's ways. 1 John ii. 29. 2 Pet. i. 4. Rom. vii. 22.

3. *To instruct.*—Christ did this, (1.) *By precept.* His precepts may be placed in three classes :—such as taught man's duty to God, Matt. xxii. 37 ; man's duty to his fellow, Matt. xxii. 39 ; and man's duty to himself, Matt. vi. 19, 20. (2.) *By example.* Being prayerful. Luke xi. 1. Lowly. Luke xxii. 27. Self-denying. Rom. xv. 3. Devoted. Luke ii. 49. Patient. 1 Pet. ii. 21-23. Forgiving. Luke xxiii. 34.

4. *To destroy.*—(1.) *Sin.* He breaks its power. Rom. vi. 18. Saves from its guilt. 1 John i. 7. Delivers from its penal consequences. John iii. 14, 15. (2.) *Death.* 1 Cor. xv. 26. Heb. ii. 15. (3.) *Satan's kingdom.* This kingdom is seen in certain principalities and powers, represented by false

religions, ecclesiastical and civil despotisms, and social and domestic tyrannies. Heb. ii. 14. Rev. xix. 20 ; xx. 10.

5. *To glorify*.—He procured eternal safety, joy, and honour for all those who are his faithful servants amid life's temptations and trials. Mat. v. 12. 1 Pet. i. 4, 5.

APPLICATION.

1. Christ has visited your hearts by his Spirit. How have you treated him ? It matters not that he abode in the world, if he abide not in you.

2. You with whom he dwells, see to it that you encourage his presence. Act in a manner worthy of your distinguished Guest.

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SKETCH XIX.

THE WONDROUS CHARACTER OF GOD'S WORKS.

"He hath made his wonderful works to be remembered."
—PSALM cxi. 4.

IN the first verse of this psalm, the author resolves to render praise unto God, in the private assembly and public congregation of the saints ; and he will do this with his "whole heart." In the second, third, and fourth verses, he represents the works of God as great, honourable, glorious, and wonderful. He says that these works are "sought out"—"investigated, carefully examined"—by those who take pleasure therein ; and that God has made them to be remembered.

In the text we have the psalmist's view of God's works, and of man's duty in reference to them.

I. THE PSALMIST'S VIEW OF GOD'S WORKS.—
"Wonderful."

God has made us susceptible of wonder. Its effects are sometimes painful, sometimes perplexing, and sometimes pleasing; and are often experienced by us when viewing the matchless works of Jehovah. In God's word his works are often spoken of as wonderful. David says that he will declare these works, Psalms xxvi. 7; that he has declared them, Psalm lxxi. 17; and he exhorts others to do the same, Psalm cv. 2.

God's works are sometimes divided thus: works of creation, providence, and redemption.

1. *His works of creation.*—These will appear to be wonderful if you consider, (1.) Their *number*. Our earth, with its hills, mountains, rivers, seas, treasures, creatures. Psalm civ. 24. Other worlds—sun, moon, stars. (2.) Their *varisty*. It has been said that there never were two human countenances exactly alike; and some have suggested that if we could carry our researches far enough, we should find this to be the case with animals, trees, plants, flowers, blades of grass, &c. And notwithstanding this diversity, there is agreement. How admirable is all this! (3.) Their *minuteness*. Myriads of living things may be found in one drop of water. (4.) Their *magnitude*. The sun is about one million three hundred thousand times larger than our earth; and there may be globes even larger than this among the countless creations of God.

2. *His works of providence.*—There is wonderful-

ness in, (1.) His *general* providence. He supplies the needs of all. *Psa. civ. 10-30.* (2.) His *special* providence. Deliverance from Egyptian bondage; journey through the wilderness. *Matt. x. 29, 30.*

3. *His work of redemption.*—In order to be impressed with the wondrous character of this work, there needs no display of eloquence; to remember the simple facts is sufficient. It is wonderful that God should proffer to save man at all. But this wonder is increased when we consider the means adopted to effect this salvation: witness the incarnation, sufferings, death, and resurrection of Jesus. It was whilst viewing these things that Paul exclaimed, "O the depth of the riches," &c., *Rom. xi. 33.*

II. THE PSALMIST'S VIEW OF MAN'S DUTY IN REGARD TO GOD'S WORKS.—They are "to be remembered."

He who rightly remembers God's works will,

1. *Observe, and strive to understand, them.*—The psalmist did so. *Psa. viii. 3; cxxxix. 14.* Perhaps most men are seriously neglectful of this duty.

2. *Feel interested in them.*—Surely the fact of the infinite perfections of God being exercised in the creation, redemption, and preservation of the world, is sufficient to excite our deepest interest.

APPLICATION.

1. Are you convinced that it is your duty to remember God's works? If not, let the consideration of your indebtedness to him for them, decide you at once. If you are, let not your thoughts and affections be too much engaged by the varied cares

and pursuits of every-day life; ever remembering that immoderation in these things is an enemy to the devout consideration of the works of the Lord.

2. See to it that the remembrance of God's works lead you to engage in God's service.

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SKETCH XX.

LOT'S WIFE.

"Remember Lot's wife."—LUKE xvii. 32.

THE history of the world is full of beacons. The voices of the dead are heard from all quarters. Every age has its great criminals, and every sin its victim, whom God brands for our warning and safety. He makes constant use of such in governing men. They may have done no good by their life, but he kills some of them, and makes them do it by their death. Many such characters have been preserved in the Bible: Korah, Ahab, Jezebel, Haman, Herod, and Judas. Some may wonder that such persons have been embalmed in Scripture. The reason which led to their punishment led also to their being kept prominently before the eyes of our race—to be "a terror to evil-doers." Lot's wife is one of these beacon-fires; and the Saviour bade the men of his time behold her lurid light. It is supposed that he was speaking of the overthrow of Jerusalem by the Romans.

Although our "island-home" may be deemed safe from invasion, we should "remember Lot's wife," as her wail comes floating along the stream of ages, bidding us beware, and not trifle with God. We are exposed to danger from causes similar to those which quenched her light.

Let us consider her peril ; her privileges ; her sin ; and her punishment.

I. HER PERIL.

She dwelt in a land whose inhabitants had filled up the measure of their guilt, and who were about to be utterly destroyed by Divine vengeance. Gen. xix. 12-14. Life among notorious sinners is beset with serious disadvantages. Were there no higher motives, self-love should lead us to guard the interests of the community. 1 Cor. xii. 26.

Ordinarily, when God visits the earth with judgments, he allows the bodies of the righteous to perish along with those of the wicked. We must not infer from this that he regards the two characters with the same feeling. The fact strongly favours the supposition that our earthly life is probationary, and will be followed by one of full and permanent retribution. In some rare instances, the lives of saints have been miraculously spared in the day of visitation. There is ground to question the religious character of Lot's wife ; and yet God provided an asylum for her. Perhaps this was as much for her husband's sake as for hers.

II. HER PRIVILEGES.

These are to be gathered from Gen. xix. 12-22. She was,

1. *Forewarned of danger.*—This was done in a very remarkable way. Two angels came to her house, and abode there all night. Herein the compassion of God is manifest. He has not left us in ignorance of our danger, nor yet unprovided with help.

2. *Informed that a place of refuge had been prepared.*—At first, she and her family were to find safety among the mountains; ultimately, Zoar was given them for a retreat. God has placed salvation within the reach of all men. 1 Tim. iv. 10.

3. *Furnished with every necessary facility for enabling her to escape.*—(1.) *Time was allowed.* The angels said they could do nothing till Lot was out of Sodom. (2.) *The journey was shortened.* (3.) *Escape was repeatedly urged.* (4.) *The angels helped.* They took hold of the hand of Lot, his wife, and their daughters.

III. HER SIN.—She looked back.

To some this may appear a very small offence; it was, however, disobedience. Our obligation to obey law is not regulated by the greatness or smallness of the test employed; it depends on the law itself, taken in all its bearings. If the test be small, there should be less temptation to disobey.

The sin of Lot's wife was,

1. *The transgression of a plain and positive command.* Gen. xix. 17. God has not left us in doubt about matters essential to salvation. His word may contain mysteries, such as an archangel cannot fathom; but the faith that is unto life, even a child may have. Religion speaks also with authority. Neglect of it is opposition to God.

2. *Marked by great ingratitude.*—By preternatural means the Lord had warned her and her family of imminent danger; and this is her return for the kindness. Sinners not only resist authority, but basely insult their greatest Benefactor. They try to persuade themselves that God does not notice their conduct; or that if he does, he will not execute judgment upon them. Isa. xxviii. 15-17.

3. *Prompted, in all probability, by worldly-mindedness.*—The context appears to teach this, ver. 31, 33. If her heart was under the influence of worldly things, it would be a serious trial to leave all her wealth to be destroyed in Sodom. We should give up all when God commands us to do so. With many men, everything has to give way to money. It is their god, and they serve it diligently. Col. iii. 5.

IV. HER PUNISHMENT.—“She became a pillar of salt,” Gen. xix. 26.

Commentators differ in opinion about the meaning of this verse. Some understand it literally, supposing that Lot’s wife was struck by lightning, and petrified; or that she lingered in the plains until the showers of fire and brimstone which destroyed the land, overtook her, and enveloping her in a sheet of sulphur, left her standing as a monument of God’s displeasure. Others interpret the passage metaphorically. Finding that *salt* is used in Scripture metaphorically (Num. xviii. 19), as an emblem of incorruption, they hold that the body of this woman perished by fire; and that the Divine judgment being recorded in the Bible, is a standing memorial of the fact, and an everlasting warning to sinners.

We may remark of this punishment that it was sudden, awful, and righteous.

1. *It was sudden.*—She had not time for even a farewell interview with her husband and daughters. There is something very alarming in sudden death. It is not always an evidence of Divine displeasure; but may arise from natural causes, or be inflicted as a warning to others.

2. *It was awful.*—She was denied the rites of sepulture. She was cut down in the act of disobeying God, and when she ought to have been fleeing for her life. Her probation was terminated with a stroke. There was no remedy in her case; the hand of the Supreme Being had done the deed.

3. *It was righteous.*—We infer this from, (1.) The character of the *Author*. The rectitude of his nature is such that he can do no wrong. Gen. xviii. 25. Ps. cxlv. 17. Tit. i. 2. His dealings with our race forbid the supposition that he will punish us unjustly. John iii. 16-18. 1 Thess. v. 9. (2.) The nature of the cause. Lot's wife disregarded warning, trifled with danger, refused help, and disobeyed God. However much we may lament the follies and pity the sufferings of the sinner, we must always recollect that he has merited all the punishment which God inflicts on him.

APPLICATION.

1. To *sinners*.—You have been often warned, but have not yet fled for safety to Christ. Do so at once.

2. To *backsliders*.—You have looked back. Repent now, lest Vengeance overtake you in your wickedness.

3. To *believers*.—Persevere in the way to heaven, whatever may be your temptations. Your eternal safety is at stake.

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SKETCH XXI.

THE FIRST SIN.

“I did eat.”—GENESIS iii. 13.

ACTIONS are not to be estimated by the length of time required for their performance. The work of many years may be unproductive of important results either for good or evil; while the work of but a few moments may seriously affect the destinies of millions unborn. How long Satan was in effecting the ruin of our first parents we know not; but perhaps the time required for it might be measured by moments rather than by days. And yet how big with tremendous consequences was the act which completed it! It constituted the first of an almost innumerable series of sins, bringing condemnation and misery upon the whole human race.

Let us consider this first sin in its nature, causes, and consequences.

I. THE NATURE OF EVE'S SIN.

Much speculation, and some of it idle, has been indulged as to whether the words which represent Eve as taking the forbidden fruit are to be understood literally. It is enough for us to know that

they represent a transaction evincing a disposition mournfully at variance with the Divine command, and exhibiting strange inconstancy, base ingratitude, foolish pride, daring rebellion, and blind infatuation.

1. *Strange inconstancy*.—What time elapsed between the creation and fall of man we know not; but we are no doubt right in supposing that it was not a long period. Man was but newly created. He was conscious of bearing the Divine image. Jehovah's great blessing had but recently been pronounced upon him. Gen. i. 28. Dominion over all earth's living creatures, and use of all earth's productions, had been granted him. i. 28-30. And yet, in the full enjoyment of all these, he must needs be in haste, as it were, to disregard the only prohibition of his gracious Sovereign. What unaccountable fickleness!

2. *Base ingratitude*.—It was the law of a Benefactor, not of a tyrant, that was broken. Fair Eden was the first pair's residence; all it contained, but one thing, was theirs. Had the command been—"Thou shalt eat of but one tree," instead of—"Of every tree of the garden," &c., ii. 16, 17, they might, with less excuse, have violated the Divine law. But to take the fruit of one forbidden tree, when that of every other tree was allowed them, what was it but ingratitude of the highest order?

3. *Foolish pride*.—Satan wrought upon the woman's passion by telling her that, on eating the forbidden fruit, she and her husband would become "as gods," ver. 5, 6. Now, had she not desired this, she would have indignantly hurled back the

suggestion; but that she was dissatisfied with her position as God's creature, created in his image, and that she vainly aspired after divinity, is clearly enough to be seen in the fact of her doing the very thing her seducer whispered to her as necessary to become Divine. Poor vain, deluded creature!

4. *Daring rebellion*.—God's prohibition was strict and unmistakeable; and that it was well understood by the transgressor, is proved by her quoting it to the tempter. Verse 8. Yet she was rebel enough (and foolish enough) to violate such a law of so good, powerful, and terrible a Ruler!

5. *Blind infatuation*.—No aid necessary to the observance of the Divine command was wanting, and upon obedience to it everything was promised; to its violation the greatest conceivable punishment was threatened—death. i. 28-30; ii. 16, 17. And yet with these three powerful considerations before her mind, Eve hesitated not to eat of the forbidden fruit!

II. THE CAUSE OF EVE'S SIN.

In answering to her Maker and Sovereign for the crime she had committed, Eve says, "The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat." The whole story of the fall shows Satan to have been the efficient cause of it; and the combination of evil qualities he displayed in accomplishing his sinful purpose is perhaps without parallel, including, as it does, cunning, misrepresentation, evil suggestion, and blasphemy.

1. *Cunning*.—This is seen, (1.) In the *subject* of his assault. Not the man, but the woman—"the weaker vessel"—inferior, perhaps, to Adam in phy-

sical strength, knowledge, and self-possession. Satan still chooses those most likely to accomplish his diabolical purposes. (2.) In the *time* of his assault. Eve was away from her husband—her counsellor and defender. He well knows the best time to succeed in his temptations. (3.) In the *method* of his assault. He did not commence by violent declamation or taunting provocation; but by gentle enquiry: "Yea, hath God said?" &c., ver. 1. In many instances, other than gentle means would be failures: and this the devil knows full well.

2. *Misrepresentation*.—Satan's aim was, to give prominence to the prohibition of the apparently trifling act of partaking of fruit, and to sink the question of its morality. "Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?" As though he had said, What! can it be possible that a Being so generous should be so unmindful of his creatures' happiness as to prohibit them from the trivial enjoyment derived from eating of the fruit of one tree. And Satan is still an adept at magnifying or lessening the importance of an act, just as suits his wicked designs.

3. *Falseness*.—Verses 4, 5. Satan, (1.) *Contradicts God*. "Ye shall not surely die." Flat contradiction he judged necessary at this stage of the temptation; and seeing that his work of seduction had reached an important point, he hesitated not to show himself to be what he has ever since appeared—a liar. (2.) *Holds out a false inducement*. "For God doth know," &c. He offers an increase of knowledge—nay, the very attributes of omnipotence and omnipresence! And all this not at some

distant time, but at once: "In the day ye eat thereof." What a tempting bait! But, as when tempting the Saviour, he offered what was not his to give.

4. *Blasphemy*.—If blasphemy be properly defined as speaking impiously of God, Satan was certainly guilty of it when he said, "God doth know," &c.; plainly attributing to him insincerity—nay, hypocrisy. And many of God's tempted ones know how their great adversary can, and does, still make use of the boldest blasphemy when plotting their downfall.

III. THE CONSEQUENCES OF EVE'S SIN.

They are a long and black train, numbering Divine rebuke; overwhelming shame; loss of happiness; banishment from Paradise; condemnation to labour and sorrow; transmission of sin; and introduction of death.

1. *Divine rebuke*.—Those were sharp and powerful words—"What is this that thou hast done?" How different from the sweet expressions of approval hitherto uttered by those Divine lips! You who have "erred and strayed from God's ways" will be best able to estimate the cutting nature of this first rebuke.

2. *Overwhelming shame*.—Verses 7, 10. They hid themselves from God, not because they had discovered any reason for being ashamed of him, but because they saw cause to be ashamed of themselves. In their Maker's presence, they appeared odious. Shame is the eldest daughter of sin.

3. *Loss of happiness*.—The fallen pair were soon made sensible of this, and bitterly indulged in re-
crimination of each other. Peace and Joy took

their flight, and War and Misery filled their places, ruling with an iron sceptre.

4. *Banishment from Eden.*—Ver. 23. First, fairest, happiest earthly abode, forsaken, and for ever! Thank God! the heavenly paradise was thrown open, when the earthly Eden was closed.

5. *Condemnation to labour and sorrow.*—Verses 16-19. Before, man's employments were pleasant, and cheerfully engaged in; now, they are irksome, and approached with reluctance. And sorrow, too, more painful than even labour, was measured out, in full cup, to the human race.

6. *Transmission of sin.*—The propensity to evil did not remain with the first guilty pair, but was propagated. Is it not, at this moment, in active existence in every unsanctified human being?

7. *Introduction of death.*—Natural, spiritual, and eternal death—all three reign imperiously. But the two latter may be conquered; and the former is a friend to the saint rather than an enemy.

LESSONS.

We may learn from this subject,

1. To regard ourselves as *ever exposed to temptation.*—If Eve was not free from it in Paradise, how can you be in a world where Satan "goeth about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour?"

2. The necessity for *checking the risings of sin.*—You are made or unmade in proportion as you regard first thoughts and feelings.

3. The danger of *parleying with Satan.*—Does not Eve's fall stamp a value on those words—"Get thee behind me, Satan?"

5. The *fatal consequences of one sin.*—One sin led

to all sin. O the madness of pleading—"Only this one!" And what after it? Perhaps hell, and an eternity of sin!

SKETCH XXII.

THE FAITHFUL SAYING.

"This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners."—1 TIMOTHY i. 15.

"Of whom I am chief," adds the apostle, an indication of the humility by which he was characterised ever after he embraced the religion of Jesus Christ, and differing materially from the language to which he had given utterance before his conversion, when he considered himself blameless as touching the law, and of the straitest sect of the Pharisees. What a delightful change must have taken place in his heart, which could induce him to state that he was "less than the least of all saints," and that he had been the "chief of sinners." And further, how honourable to him was the acknowledgment that he owed that change to Him whom he had previously blasphemed, and whose followers he had persecuted.

Let us consider the declaration in which the apostle makes this acknowledgment; and in so doing, notice its import and character.

I. THE IMPORT OF THE SAYING.—That “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.”

Guided by this statement, we observe,

1. *Men are sinners.*—This doctrine is, (1.) *Taught in the Bible.* Mic. vii. 2. Rom. iii. 10-18. (2.) *Sustained by the records of history.* Let the ancient histories of Carthage, Persia, Greece, and Rome; and the modern histories of Europe, China, India, and America testify. But, more reliable than even these, listen to the voice of inspiration on the subject, as it speaks by Paul in Rom. i. 21-32. (3.) *Borne out by daily observation.* Whether it be made in courts of criminal enquiry, or among the outer movements of every-day life—whether among the refined or the rude—the honoured or the despised, we behold one common characteristic, and are compelled to acknowledge that sin has spread its darkening shadow over the entire human race. (4.) *In agreement with personal consciousness.* Who has not felt the war in his members, and been induced to say, “When I would do good, evil is present with me;” and, whilst struggling with the gigantic monster, sin, been led to cry, “O wretched man,” &c., Rom. vii. 24.

2. *As sinners, men are in great peril.*—They are all transgressors—what can they expect but to suffer the penalty of their transgression? And that is, nothing less than death itself. “The wages of sin is death.”

Consequently,

3. *Men need a Saviour.*—Is the world to perish, or is it to live? Is there anything in it to cause God to interest himself in its welfare? Surely.

4. *A suitable Saviour has been provided.*—“Christ

Jesus came," &c. His suitability is seen, (1.) In his *person*. Only a Divine Being could save. As such the Scriptures represent Christ. Heb. i. 3. Rom. ix. 5. Col. ii. 9. (2.) In his *work*. He left the bosom of his Father, as is clear from John xvii. 5; but it was not to wander through the vast infinity of space, and receive the adorations of the dwellers in the worlds he had created; nor, as Judge, to pass sentence of condemnation upon sinners, John iii. 17;—it was to save fallen man. He purchased salvation by his death. Heb. ii. 9. He offers salvation in the Gospel. John vi. 37. He bestows salvation by his Spirit. Tit. iii. 4-6. He carries on this salvation on earth. Phil. i. 6. He will consummate this salvation in heaven. 1 Pet. i. 3-5.

II. THE CHARACTER OF THE SAYING.—"Faithful, and worthy of all acceptance."

1. *It is "faithful."*—Some sayings are specious in appearance, but, on examination, are found to be deceptive and worthless. Others, though true in themselves, are not available by us. But this saying can be safely relied on. Its faithfulness is, (1.) *Testified by Scripture*. Isa. liii. 5. Luke xix. 10. Heb. vii. 25. (2.) *Corroborated by experience*. The text itself is confirmation furnished by the experience of one who had, in his own history, proved the reality of Christ's power to save. And evidence upon the same subject, equally striking as Paul's, is given in the lives of Abraham, David, Hezekiah, Zacchæus, Peter, and a cloud of witnesses both of past and present times.

2. *It is "worthy of all acceptance."* (1.) In all

its integrity. Every word in it is full of meaning to the sinner; not one can be omitted without seriously mutilating the Gospel, endangering the sinner's safety, and drawing down the curse of God. (2.) *By all men.* It is "worthy of *all* acceptance." If any man or order of men can dispense with the safety and happiness which salvation ensures, then may they turn a deaf ear to the declaration of the text; but until such is the case, it not only deserves their acceptance, but to receive it must appear to be to their highest interest. 1 Tim. iv. 8.

APPLICATION.

1. Have you accepted the saying of the text? We ask you not if you are moral, but if you are resting upon Christ Jesus alone for salvation. Remember he is the only Saviour.

2. If on examination, you are compelled to admit that you have not accepted the faithful saying, be entreated to do so immediately. We have time now, but know not how long it may last. Are you young? the young are often cut down. Are you aged? the bell will soon toll your knell. The blossoms of the tomb are upon you, and you will soon be numbered with the dead. Whoever or whatever you are, we urge you to believe in Christ *now*.

3. Having accepted this saying, hold it fast. Let no one rob you of it, for salvation is in it.

SKETCH XXIII.

HEAVENLY TREASURE IN EARTHEN VESSELS.

"But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us."—2 CORINTHIANS iv. 7.

CORINTH was a city of opulence and licentiousness. Some of the members of its church having fallen into gross irregularities, the apostle, in his first epistle to it, reproves them with great plainness, and very probably not without effect; for in this epistle, he addresses them in a strain more comforting and encouraging. There were, however, contentions amongst them, arising from Judaizing teachers, who spake disparagingly of the apostle and the Gospel ministry. Now, while Paul was remarkable for humility, he had, at the same time, exalted views of the ministry which he exercised. We are not surprised, therefore, to find that in the preceding chapter he is stoutly defending his sacred calling. And yet he is careful to guard the Corinthians against the mistake of supposing that the Gospel owes its influence to the men employed in propagating it; saying, in the words of the text—"But we have this treasure," &c.

The text directs our attention to treasure; treasure meanly deposited; treasure meanly deposited for a glorious purpose.

I. TREASURE.—"We have this treasure."

All men do not regard the Gospel as a treasure. Some look upon it as dross. They neither see its beauty nor feel their need of it. They prefer their pleasure, their farm, their merchandise; and are full of excuses for their conduct.

We observe respecting this treasure that it is,

1. *Valuable*.—It is not every kind of property we call treasure; we give this name to our most precious things. We have treasures of philosophy and science; but Gospel treasure excels all such as much as eternity excels time. In the Gospel is inestimable wealth and immortal life, provided by Divine wisdom, truth, and love. The word is in God's own handwriting, and offers pardon for man's guilt, purification for defilement, help for trouble, deliverance from temptation, and victory over death and the grave. In it may be found truth for the understanding, beauty for the imagination, excitement for the passions, and peace for the conscience. We deserve nothing, and have everything. The lost fortunes of the world are recovered.

2. *Imperishable*.—Worldly wealth gathers rust; the canker and the moth destroy it. The schemes of the selfish, the airy castles of the ambitious, collapse. The fashion of this world passeth away. But the Gospel, full of life, is in the track of our wandering race to the end of the world and in ages to come. Go not to the mart of Mammon, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God.

Observe, further, that this treasure is,

1. *Provided by Christ*.—He bought it with his precious blood. 1 Pet. i. 18. 2 Cor. viii. 9.

2. *Offered to all men*.—The blessing reaches far

onward as the blight of sin and the reign of death. We know of no national, educational, conventional, or ecclesiastical restrictions. Mark xvi. 15.

II. TREASURE MEANLY DEPOSITED.—“We have this treasure in earthen vessels.”

It is deposited,

1. *In vessels*.—It is supposed that the reference here is to common vessels of domestic use. See Barnes. This treasure was first committed to the apostles. They were not the originators—only the publishers, of it.

2. *In earthen vessels*.—The apostles were *earthen* vessels. Vessels of gold might have been chosen. Angels might have been employed, and might have considered themselves honoured in such a service. But feeble men, liable to accident and death, were chosen. Nor is the treasure committed to its bearers on account of personal superiority, such as profound learning, splendid talents, distinguished eloquence, or social position. The man of faith, prayer, and self-denial, burning with the fire that glowed in the bosoms of the fishermen of Galilee, is still the successful minister.

III. TREASURE MEANLY DEPOSITED FOR A GLORIOUS PURPOSE.—“That the excellency,” &c.

Here consider,

1. *The power adverted to*.—(1.) *Of working miracles*. This was peculiar to the apostles and their coadjutors, and was seen in healing the sick, raising the dead, and casting out devils. (2.) *Of saving sinners*. It arrested the attention of the thoughtless, purified the unclean, broke down the prejudice

of the proud, and transformed some of the most daring blasphemers and persecutors into eminent saints. (3.) Of *sustaining the minds of believers*. Friends had to be forsaken, possessions given up, bodily suffering endured, and mental anguish experienced. 2 Cor. xi. 24-28. And all this is endured, more or less, at the present day. (4.) Of *evangelizing whole nations*. Idolatrous and infidel nations have, by this power, been induced to cast their false gods and their unbelief aside, and now worship the only true God.

2. *To whom this power belongs*.—"That the excellency of the power might be of God, and not of us." There is a proneness in us to ascribe remarkable achievements to the agents by whom they are wrought. Acts xiv. 8-13. If angels had been preachers, we should have been in danger of giving the glory to them; if princes and potentates had been so employed, our trust would have been too much in temporal power. We may rejoice that such instrumentality has not been used. 1 Cor. i. 27-29. But we should be careful to enquire for the higher and real Cause of spiritual quickening, and give the glory to him. For it is possible to have the zeal of a Peter, the energy of a Boanerges, the eloquence of an Apollos, the labours of a Paul, and yet fail of success without the power of God.

APPLICATION.

Learn from this subject,

1. *The preciousness of the Gospel*.—It is treasure of value beyond all earthly treasure. With it, how rich we are; without it, how poor we are!

2. *Whom to trust for salvation*—Not to devoted saints, or gifted ministers; but to Christ, and to Him alone.

SKETCH XXIV.

LIFE IN JESUS.

"And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day."—JOHN vi. 40.

"If a man die, shall he live again?" is a question that has frequently been asked, but one that could not be satisfactorily answered independent of Divine revelation. There have been men in all ages who have accepted the doctrine of a future state as harmonizing with the desires and wants of human nature, and their ideas of a Supreme Being. But the settlement of this question on a firm basis we owe to Him who is the resurrection and the life; and who, in the text and in other portions of Holy Writ, promises it to all those who believe on him.

In considering this portion of Scripture, we will direct your attention to the blessings announced; the character on whom they shall be conferred; the period when they shall be bestowed; and the guarantee for their communication.

I. THE BLESSINGS ANNOUNCED.—"Resurrection" and "everlasting life."

1. *Resurrection*.—"I will raise him up at the last day." That the human body shall be raised, is, (1.) *Clearly taught in Scripture*. John v. 28, 29.

1 Cor. xv. 51-53. (2.) To be *effected* by *Divine power*. Many as are the objections raised to this doctrine, they are all more than met by the fact that it shall be wrought by the Almighty. 1 Cor. xv. 35-38. Is it unreasonable to suppose that He who built the body shall be able to restore it from the ruins of the grave? Phil. iii. 21. (3.) A *great privilege* to the *believer*. It is the completion of his nature, and the filling up of his cup of bliss. Rom. viii. 22, 23. When raised, the body shall appear as incorruptible, glorious, powerful, and spiritual. Well may the believer joyfully sing—

“For ever with the Lord!
Amen! so let it be!
Life from the dead is in that word!
’Tis immortality!”

2. *Everlasting life*.—When the Scriptures would represent heaven to us, they borrow imagery from the present state of things. Frequently it is spoken of as life. We generally understand life as representative of enjoyment. The life of earth, however, has many drawbacks, and hence the enjoyments of earth are unsatisfying. Such is not the case with the life of heaven; it is perfect, therefore its enjoyment is complete. It is not one blessing, but an assemblage of blessings. The best of earthly things are but accessories to happiness; this is felicity.

II. THE CHARACTER ON WHOM THE BLESSINGS OF THE TEXT SHALL BE CONFERRED.—“He that seeth and believeth.”

“To see” and “to believe,” when Christ is the

object, are generally used synonymously in the Scriptures, and are no doubt so employed in the text. To obtain the blessings of resurrection and everlasting life, we must,

1. *Put on a profession of faith.*—Heb. xi. 6. He who puts on Christ receives him as his “all in all;” and before he does this, it is necessary that he should credit the testimony of Scripture respecting his divinity, humanity, example, atoning death, resurrection, ascension, intercession, and second coming to judge and reward all men.

2. *Experience the power of faith.*—It is by faith that the soul is united to God, and made partaker of his nature. It is by its exercise alone that the believer is sustained amid the toils and trials of his weary pilgrimage, and enabled to triumph in the last hours of life.

“Faith, mighty faith! the promise sees,
And looks to that alone;
Laughs at impossibilities,
And cries, ‘It shall be done!’”

3. *Exhibit the fruits of faith.*—Obedience to God. Power over sin. Victory over Satan. Love to the Saviour. Conformity to Christ.

III. THE PERIOD WHEN THE BLESSINGS OF THE TEXT ARE TO BESTOWED.—“At the last day.”

In other parts of Scripture, this day is called “that day,” in order to show us that it is a very important, remarkable, and distinguished day; “the great day,” to show that the magnitude of its proceedings is inexpressible, and because it is the day of final decision; “the last day,” the day for

which all other days were made, to which all other days are tending, in which all other days shall terminate, and with whose judicial process and final doom the transactions of every other day are deeply involved. On this day,

1. *Life's troubles will end.*—The duration of the Christian's sorrow, trial, and affliction is not eternal. These things may be keen, but they are short-lived. 2 Cor. iv. 17, 18.

2. *Life's work will be reviewed.*—This is the appointed, and certainly the most proper, time for the manifestation of the believer's sorrows, sufferings, patience, toil, self-denial, faith, and love; the result of which will be, the admiration of angels, and the commendation of the Great Master—"Come, ye blessed," &c., Matt. xxv. 34-40.

3. *Life's final recompense will be given.*—With both the righteous and the wicked, probation will then terminate; and the retribution, not of an individual, a family, a community, a country merely, but of the world, will begin. The reign of Mercy will end; the last act in the administration of Christ's mediatorial kingdom will have taken place; and having seated himself on the throne of judgment, Jesus will cease to intercede, and will fix the eternal destinies of all.

IV. THE GUARANTEE FOR THE COMMUNICATION OF THE BLESSINGS STATED IN THE TEXT.—"This is the will of him that sent me."

That such is the case is proved,

1. *From the express declaration of Scripture.*—Ezek. xxxiii. 11. 2 Pet. iii. 9.

2. *From the gift of Christ.*—The object of his

entrance into the world was nothing short of the eternal glorification with himself of all who believe in him. John iii. 17. Would the Father have sent forth his Son for any less purpose than that of the complete salvation of his creatures? And do we not read, in this gift, the assurance that this purpose shall certainly be accomplished?

3. *From God's gracious dealings with sinners.*—To pardon their sins, to hush their fears, to chase away their doubts, to deliver them out of their temptations—is not all this intended by God as preparatory to a state of eternal safety and blessedness? Why evince such regard for, and take such pains with, them, if it be not for some worthy and glorious purpose? He saves and sustains on earth that he may glorify in heaven.

4. *From the experience of believers.*—Paul said, "I know whom I have believed," &c., 2 Tim. i. 12. Enter the chamber of the dying saint, and listen to his departing words. Hear what Bishop Bedell says, as he leaves this earthly scene: "Through the merits of that atoning blood which has washed me from all my sin, I ascend to my Father and your Father." Listen to the dying exclamation of Mr. Toplady: "O what delights! Who can fathom the joys of the third heaven? The sky is clear. There is no cloud. Come, Lord Jesus! come quickly!" And how many thousands besides these have experienced similar ecstasies, and rejoiced in equally strong assurance, when departing from all earthly scenes, and entering the great, but to them glorious future!

APPLICATION.

1. See the importance of exercising faith in Christ.

—It procures for its possessor blessings of incalculable worth. And its value is heightened by the consideration that its exercise alone will entitle us to their possession. Our best performances, whilst in our carnal state, are as filthy rags.

2. Learn the *necessity* for its *exercise*.—Though resurrection and everlasting life are ours by Christ's purchase, they will never be ours by actual possession unless we honour their Giver by believing in him. How is it possible that they should be?

3. *Highly estimate* your *future privileges*.—Certain as you are of going down to the grave, you are equally certain of rising from it; and though the cares and sorrows of this life are oppressive, they shall be followed by the rest and joy of everlasting life.

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SKETCH XXV.

THE DESTROYER DESTROYED.

"For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil."—1 JOHN iii. 8.

JOHN here speaks of the founders of the two great opposing empires of sin and holiness. In the third verse, he urges upon the disciple the purity of the Master; then declares, "He that committeth sin is of the devil. Satan set up a fabric of sin and misery; but Christ long since came to demolish it. This he is now doing, and will certainly bring the work to a final issue."

In turning your attention to this subject, let us consider the works of the devil, and their destruction by Christ.

I. THE WORKS OF THE DEVIL.

The Scriptures tell us a great deal about the Son of God. We know whence he came, what he did, where he is, and what he is doing. We know but little of the devil's personal history. The information the Bible gives of him is mostly contained in isolated passages. It is sufficient, however, to teach us that he was a daring rebel against God, and that for his rebellion he was cast down into eternal darkness.

Observe the nature, design, and consequences of Satan's works.

1. *The nature of Satan's works.*—In speaking of them, we confine ourselves to his operations amongst men. Having mysterious access to the mind, he is able to pollute and ruin it. Sometimes he uses the bodily organs in this work. Thus he assailed Eve. He opposes the truth. Acts xiii. 10. He produces lies. John viii. 44. Instigates ambitious wars. Is a prime promoter of infidelity, Romanism, paganism, Mahommetanism, Mormonism, and every other form of false religion. But after all, his influence is moral, not physical. He may tempt, but he cannot compel.

2. *The design of Satan's works.*—This was, (1.) *To insult God.* This he did by misrepresenting his character and denying his truth. (2.) *To destroy man.* Physically, spiritually, eternally.

3. *The consequences of Satan's works.*—(1.) *Guilt.* As the consequence of sin. (2.) *Misery.* As the

consequence of guilt. (8.) *Death*. As the penalty of disobedience. These consequences are not confined to one class of men, or to one period of time; but are experienced by all men in all ages.

II. THE DESTRUCTION OF THE WORKS OF THE DEVIL BY CHRIST.

Let us,

1. *State what is understood by the destruction of the works of the devil.*—(1.) To correct man's errors. Concerning the Divine character, the nature and tendency of sin, the source of true enjoyment, and the nature and importance of his duties. (2.) To deliver him from *sin*. From its pollution, condemnation, power, and future consequences. (3.) To secure him against temptation. From Satan, the flesh, and the world. (4.) To preserve him in obedience. In domestic, civil, and religious relationships.

2. *Enquire how the destruction of the works of the devil was effected.*—(1.) By the teaching and example of Christ. His teaching set forth the greatest truths in the clearest manner; and his example exhibited the noblest virtues in the most striking and attractive forms. (2.) By the sacrificial merit of his death. The means of the pardon and restoration of man to the Divine favour. Col. ii. 15. (3.) By the power of his resurrection and intercession. By the former of these he triumphed over death and the grave, and by the latter he guarantees the safety of his subjects and the ultimate triumph of his kingdom. (4.) By the effusion of the Spirit. Through this ministers are to be raised up and qualified, truth disseminated, the hearts of men renewed, and every form of error destroyed from among men.

APPLICATION.

1. Learn the *odious character* of *sin*.—It is the work of the worst being, and is fraught with curses and ruin.

2. *Rejoice over its doom*.—Nothing is more certain than its everlasting destruction by Christ.

3. *Abstain* from all that will *encourage evil*.—Hate it, shun it, oppose it.

4. *Give thanks* for the many who have *experienced Christ's ability to destroy sin*.

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SKETCH XXVI.

THE REIGN OF CHRIST.

"And a King shall reign and prosper."—JER. xxiii. 5.

THE Old Testament contains many references to the Saviour. "To him give all the prophets witness," Acts x. 43. There is considerable diversity in their manner of presenting him to our minds. It is both interesting and instructive to observe the metaphors they use in describing him to us. The most striking natural objects, and the most exalted ecclesiastical and civil dignitaries, are brought forward, to impress us with the greatness of his person and the glory of his work. The text presents him to us in his regal character, reigning and prospering.

We remark,

I. THE LORD JESUS CHRIST IS A KING

1. *He bears the title of a King.*—This is, (1.) *Claimed by himself.* John xviii. 36. Luke xxii. 30. (2.) *Given to him by his Father.* Psal. ii. 6, 7. (3.) *Ascribed to him by his people.* John i. 49. Col. i. 13. (4.) *Virtually conceded by his enemies.* Matt. viii. 28, 29.

2. *He enjoys the honours of a King.*—(1.) He has been *inaugurated.* Psal. xlv. 7. Heb. i. 6. He does not reign without appointment and public recognition. (2.) He sits on a *throne.* Psal. xlv. 6. This signifies exaltation to regal power. (3.) He sways a *sceptre.* Num. xxiv. 17. Heb. i. 8. Represents honour and authority. (4.) He wears a *crown.* Rev. vi. 2. This is for ornament and dignity. (5.) He receives *homage.* By the right of his Godhead he is Lord over all creatures. Col. i. 15-17. Those whom he has redeemed are his in a special sense. John xvii. 6. He is served on earth. Acts vii. 59. Col. iii. 24. He is worshipped in heaven. Rev. vii. 10; xxii. 3.

3. *He possesses the qualifications of a King.*—Among these may be named, (1.) *Authority.* To rule. Mic. v. 2. To execute judgment. John v. 27. To change institutions. Mark ii. 28. To forgive sin. Matt. ix. 6. (2.) *Wisdom.* Col. ii. 2, 3. (3.) *Power.* In heaven and earth. Matt. xxviii. 18. Over devils. Matt. viii. 28-32. To uphold all things. Heb. i. 3. Of life and death. John v. 21. Rev. i. 17, 18. (4.) *Faithfulness.* Rev. xix. 11. 1 Pet. iv. 19.

4. *He performs the works of a King.*—He, (1.) *Makes laws* for the guidance of his subjects. John xiii. 34. The New Testament is his statute-book, and to name his laws would be to quote a great part of it. (2.) *Protects his followers.* Luke xxi. 18.

(3.) *Overcomes his enemies.* The devil. Matt. iv. 1-11. Col. ii. 15. The world. John xvi. 33.

II. AS KING, JESUS SHALL REIGN AND PROSPER.

Our attention is confined, in the present instance, to the Saviour's *mediatorial* empire, in which he is seen destroying the works of the devil, and establishing the Divine authority amongst men. We will consider his reign and his prosperity.

1. *His reign.*—It is, (1.) *Spiritual.* A hollow and merely outward loyalty will not satisfy Jesus. "God is a Spirit," John iv. 24. Sin is conceived within the soul of man, and there it entrenches itself. Christ expels it, and enthrones himself. Love and obedience characterize his people. Col. i. 27. Rom. xiv. 17. (2.) *Righteous.* Christ is a righteous Person, and he reigns in the interest of righteousness. Psal. xlv. 7. Isa. ix. 4, 5; xxxii. 1. (3.) *Peaceful.* In many parts of Scripture, our Lord is represented as being, or having been, at war. Psal. lxxviii. 18. He fights that his people may have peace. When he comes into the sinner's heart, strife ceases, fear flees, and trouble is banished. Rom. v. 1. Gal. v. 22. His dominion brings peace to the community, as well as to the individual. Isa. ix. 6, 7. Jer. xxiii. 6. Luke ii. 14.

"Blessings abound where'er he reigns:
The prisoner leaps to lose his chains;
The weary find eternal rest;
And all the sons of want are blest."

2. *His prosperity.*—Notice, (1.) The nature of this prosperity. It shall be complete and lasting. The world's ancient dynasties have disappeared. Chris-

tianity remains, and must remain. Dan. ii. 44. Luke i. 33. All other empires have been limited, but his is to be over all. We do not suppose that all creatures will become his loving and loyal subjects, but that his authority will be exercised over them, either as obedient subjects or as conquered enemies. 1 Cor. xv. 25. He will defeat the devil, and drive him down to his own dark den. Millions of men will be converted, and made the Saviour's friends. He will accomplish all the grand purposes of his incarnation. (2.) The *ground* of his prosperity. His character merits it. He is the world's rightful Sovereign. His work has laid the foundation for it. It is the Creator against the rebel creature, good against evil, truth against error, right against wrong. His Father guarantees it, and is bringing it to pass. Psal. ii. 8. Isa. liii. 11, 12. Eph. i. 20-22.

APPLICATION.

1. Are you the subjects of this King? If you are not subjects, you are rebels. You should know your relationship with him.

2. If you are his subjects, serve him faithfully, and rejoice in his prosperity.

3. If you are rebels against his government, repent now, lest he come and destroy you as enemies.

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SKETCH XXVII.

FELLOWSHIP WITH CHRIST IN HIS GLORY.

"When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory."—COLOSSIANS iii. 4.

PAUL is supposed to have penned this epistle when a prisoner at Rome. But though in prison, he had great joy of soul. His letter is full of noble sentiments, eloquently uttered. In it there is much beauty, sweetness, and power. The first and second chapters are chiefly doctrinal; the third is practical. The first duty to which he calls attention in the latter is heavenly-mindedness. How tender, and yet how earnest—how sublime, and yet how simple, are his words! "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above." Then he assigns the reason why they should do this: "For ye are dead, and your life is hid," &c. Christ is your treasure; and he being in heaven, your hearts should be there also. True, he is hid from view; but your life is hid with him; and if hid with him, it is safe—you shall receive it in all its perfection. "When Christ, who is," &c.

Notice,

I. THE CHARACTERISTIC APPELATION BY WHICH CHRIST IS SET FORTH.—"Our life."

He is the Source of every blessing. "In him

we live, and move, and have our being," *Psa. xxxvi. 9.*

1. *Christ was the original Bestower of life.*—In *John i. 1-4* it is distinctly taught that Christ is God—that he made all things—and that we are indebted to him for existence. When man came from the Creator's hands, his life was perfect. He was monarch of the world which the Supreme Architect had provided for him. He bore the Divine image. He had a clear intellect, a correct judgment, and a refined taste. He possessed wisdom, holiness, and happiness; all springing from God. But sin invaded Eden. Man aspired to be as God. In doing this he forfeited his life, and subjected himself to death—death temporal, spiritual, and eternal. In the eye of the law he was dead, and there required but the execution of its sentence to complete his woe. But Jesus saw, and pitied, and resolved to save; and "in the fulness of the time," he came, and "died, the just for the unjust;" "he died that man might live." Hence,

2. *Christ is the Restorer of life.*—He restores, (1.) *The life of the body.* Probably the continuance of the human race on earth, after the fall, was owing to the mediation of Christ. If so, we should regard food, raiment, health, domestic happiness, and all the enjoyments of our earthly life, as the Saviour's purchase. Certainly the resurrection of the dead, at the last day, will be by him. *John vi. 40. Phil. iii. 20, 21.* (2.) *Spiritual life to the soul.* The Divine life in the good does not spring primarily from repentance, faith, and obedience; but from Christ. He is "a quickening Spirit." Christ is the life of his people's faith, hope, love, joy, &c.

They can exultingly exclaim, "You hath he quickened, who were dead," &c. "I live, yet not I," &c. They are spiritually-minded; and "to be spiritually-minded is life." Of this life Christ is the Source, and the Holy Spirit the Sustainer. (3.) *Eternal life.* Believers have this life in embryo on earth. "And this is the record," &c., 1 John v. 11, 12, "And this is life eternal," &c., John xvii. 3. He that drinks of the water Christ gives, "shall never thirst." It "shall be in him a well of water, springing up," &c., John iv. 14. "I am the resurrection and the life." The perfection of this life will be in heaven.

"There the crystalline stream bursting forth from the throne,
Flows on, and for ever shall flow;
Its waves, as they roll, are with melody rife,
And its waters are sparkling with beauty and life."

II. THE INTERESTING EVENT ADVERTED TO.—
"When Christ shall appear."

The momentousness of this event is beyond human calculation. In it are involved the destinies of our race, and the glory of the Redeemer. It is predicted in both Testaments. *Psa. ix. 7, 8; 1. 8-6. Dan. vii. 9, 10.* Matthew (xxv.) records the description given of it by Christ himself; and the apostles portray some of its thrilling scenes. They exhort the churches to prepare for the coming of the day of God, 1 John ii. 28; assuring them that they shall be rewarded according to their works, 2 Cor. v. 10, and share the exaltation of Christ—"appear with him in glory." Consider,

1. *The Person who will appear.*—"Christ." He who redeemed the world will also judge it. This is most fitting. He is fully qualified.

2. *The manner of Christ's appearing.*—"In glory."

(1.) In the glory of his *Person*. His eyes as a flame of fire. His countenance as the sun shineth in his strength. His voice as the sound of many waters.

(2.) In the glory of his *administration*. "He shall sit upon the throne of his glory: and before him," &c., Matt. xxv. 31, 32. When he came in the flesh, he had to endure reproach and pain; when he comes again, it will be in glory. He will give clear, and even amazing proofs of his Godhead, and will consummate his mediatorial reign. He will appear in the glory of his *power*, for he will raise the dead; in the glory of his *wisdom*, for he will make manifest the thoughts, words, and deeds of all men; in the glory of his *faithfulness*, for he will reward every one; in the glory of his *justice*, for he will punish the wicked; in the glory of his *grace*, for he will exalt his followers to everlasting honour and joy in his kingdom.

III. THE DISTINGUISHED HONOUR PROMISED TO CHRIST'S FOLLOWERS.—"Then shall ye also appear with him in glory."

This honour shall consist in,

1. *Witnessing Christ's glory.*—Arrayed in it, and sitting upon his eternal throne, every eye shall see him. But different feelings shall be experienced by those who behold Christ: those who have sinned against him being full of shame; while those who have served him shall admire his glory and rejoice in its manifestation. Job xix. 26. Rev. xxii. 4.

2. *Sharing in Christ's glory.*—They shall, (1.) *Wear the same human nature.* Paul declares it to be the purpose of the Lord Jesus Christ to change

the bodies of the saints, and "fashion them like unto his own glorious body," Phil. iii. 21; and in what such resemblance will consist may be gathered, at least in part, from 1 Cor. xv. 42-44. (2.) *Rejoice in his mediatorial triumph.* It was long since said concerning Jesus, "He must reign till he," &c., 1 Cor. xv. 25. This conquest shall be achieved at his second appearing; for "he shall have put down all rule," &c., 1 Cor. xv. 24. Then shall be "heard, as it were the voice of a great multitude," &c., Rev. xix. 6. (3.) *Partake of eternal felicity.* Which shall be not merely negative—as, freedom from sin, pain, sorrow, toil, and death; but positive enjoyment, and that of the highest order—as, association with angels and glorified saints; the possession of a pure nature; the supply of every want; and the sight of, communion with, and praise to, God. And this eternally—eternally progressive.

APPLICATION.

Are you living or dead? You will have to meet Christ; to stand at his bar; to hear his voice; to enjoy his glory, or suffer his frown. Accept Christ now, and you shall receive eternal life.

Ye who love Christ, think with joy of his second coming. 1 John iii. 2.

SKETCH XXVIII.

PROCRASTINATION.

"Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee."—Acts xxiv. 25.

PROCRASTINATION, whether seen in relation to efforts necessary for the attainment of riches, knowledge, or personal safety, is admitted to be an evil; but when exhibited in reference to the possession of religion—a much more important subject—it must appear to be a serious one indeed. It is also a prevailing one; and if the commonness of wrong-doing be an argument for its frequent consideration, we should be justified in paying much more attention to the sin of religious procrastination than it usually receives at our hands.

Felix stands prominently on the Scripture page as one guilty of this sin. We therefore select his memorable words to Paul for our consideration; in doing which, let us enquire into the nature of his disposition, as seen in them; and consider the consequences of its indulgence.

I. ENQUIRE INTO THE NATURE OF FELIX'S DISPOSITION.

"Go thy way for this time," he said to Paul, when his arguments on righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come became irresistible; and so showed himself a procrastinator. The disposition

of such a one appears to be shamelessly bold, flagrantly wicked, unjustifiably sinful.

1. *Shamelessly bold*.—He who procrastinates is a trifler; and his unblushing boldness is seen in the fact that he is guilty of trifling, (1.) With the *most important subject* that can engage his attention. Not with rank, wealth, politics, science, social position, domestic comfort, reputation, health, or even life itself; but with *religion*. (2.) With the *greatest Being* in the universe—*God*. Not staying to enquire what he is to other orders of intelligences, is he not such to you, seeing that he is your only Proprietor; your greatest Benefactor; and your most glorious Sovereign? Is he not the boldest man who can say to him, "Go thy way for this time?"

2. *It is flagrantly wicked*.—It is a disposition which exhibits, (1.) A *yielding* to the *suggestions* of an *evil heart*. (2.) A *shameful abuse* of *God's forbearance*. (3.) An *opposition* to the *drawings* of the *Divine Spirit*. (4.) A *reckless indifference* to *eternal safety*.

3. *It is unjustifiably sinful*.—(1.) The *natural inclination* to its *indulgence* will not justify it. Your sense of obligation to God should be stronger than it. (2.) The *opportunities* for the *attainment*, and the *propriety* and *advantage* of the *cultivation*, of *religious promptitude*, render it still less justifiable.

II. CONSIDER THE CONSEQUENCES OF INDULGING A PROCRASTINATING DISPOSITION.

Its indulgence,

1. *Renders more formidable the difficulties which attend the attainment of salvation*.—Such difficulties proceed not from God, but are thrown in the sin-

ner's way by Satan: and arise from unbelief, confirmed wrong principles, evil habits, tempting pleasures, foolish amusements, wicked companions, worldly engagements, wealthy possessions; and, like all other evils, multiply and strengthen with time.

2. *Increases the peril of the procrastinator.*—By provoking the Divine Being, (1.) To *withdraw the influences of the Holy Spirit*. Gen. vi. 3. (2.) To *visit with signal chastisement*. In the shape of commercial reverses, sudden accidents, painful bereavement, lingering illness, alarming death.

3. *Adds fearfully to his final account.*—Rom. ii. 4, 5. Means of salvation are not forgotten after they have been enjoyed, but will one day be the subject of searching enquiry. At such enquiry, he who has slighted them must stand speechless.

APPLICATION.

1. Many of you have shown yourselves to be actuated by this procrastinating spirit. Is it to influence you any longer? If so, it will only be because you are strangely infatuated—"led captive by the devil at his will." O act for God, and act promptly and energetically!

2. But the language of others of you, instead of being that of the text, is that of the poet:

"Closer and closer let me cleave
To thy beloved embrace."

This prayer may be answered in your experience every day you live. Encourage God's presence on earth, and then you shall enjoy his glory in heaven for ever.

SKETCH XXIX.

GOD'S BUILDING.

"Ye are God's building."—1 CORINTHIANS iii. 9.

THE church of Christ is presented to our view in the sacred Scriptures under different figures. In Isaiah v. 1-7 it is spoken of as a vineyard; in Eph. i. 22, 23, and Col. i. 24, as the body of Christ. In the text it is presented to us as a building; and similar representations may be met with in 2 Cor. vi. 16. Eph. ii. 21. Heb. iii. 6. 1 Pet. ii. 5.

Let us view this building in its Proprietor; Foundation; materials; agency; and erection.

I. THE PROPRIETOR.—"*God's building.*"

1. *God designed the plan.*—The purpose of the formation of the church originated in the Divine mind. 2 Thess. ii. 13. Eph. i. 4.

2. *God superintends the erection.*—He provides ministers. Jer. iii. 15. Eph. iv. 11, 12. He secures the church's interests. Isa. iv. 5. Matt. xvi. 18.

3. *God inhabits the house.*—Psa. lxxviii. 16. 2 Cor. vi. 16.

II. THE FOUNDATION.—Jesus Christ. See ver. 11.

A foundation represents,

1. *Selection.*—A foundation-stone is not taken at random, but is chosen with care. 1 Pet. ii. 6.

2. *Suitability*.—The Divine nature, and therefore perfect character, of Christ rendered him pre-eminently suitable. 1 Cor. iii. 11.

3. *Strength*.—This is set forth by his being spoken of under the similitude of a stone. Isa. xxviii. 16. His strength is seen in preserving his people. Luke xxi. 18.

4. *Stability*.—Whatever parts of a building be insecure, the foundation should be good. 2 Tim. ii. 19. Matt. vii. 24, 25.

Christ is the Foundation,

1. *Of our salvation as individuals*.—Every human being, without exception, owes his salvation to Christ. Isa. xlv. 4. Acts iv. 11, 12.

2. *Of the safety of the church as an institution*.—Its enemies are numerous and violent; but it is surrounded by Divine power. Isa. xlix. 25. Zech. ii. 4, 5.

This is evident from,

1. *The declaration of the Father*.—Isa. xlii. 1. Matt. iii. 17. Eph. i. 17-23.

2. *The relationship of Christ to man*.—1 Tim. ii. 5. Isa. xlix. 16.

3. *The testimony of saints*.—In the difficulties and trials of life many have trusted in Christ, and in the hour of death have found him to be their comfort and strength.

III. THE MATERIALS.

1. *Their nature*.—They are men, destined to an unending existence. Peter speaks of them as "lively stones," 1 Pet. ii. 5.

2. *Their original state*.—They were in the quarry of nature, and unfit for a place in the temple of

God until brought out and prepared by the Divine Builder. 1 Cor. vi. 9-11.

3. *Their diversity*.—As in a building there are different materials, so the church of Christ is made up of men of every class, character, age, and country. Matt. viii. 11. Rev. vii. 9, 10.

4. *Their number*.—God has probably done much more in the conversion of sinners than we are aware of, or are sometimes disposed to allow. Heb. ii. 10.

5. *Their value*.—The estimation they are held in by the Heavenly Architect is seen in the terms in which he speaks of them. Ex. xix. 5. Lam. iv. 2. Mal. iii. 17.

IV. THE AGENCY.

1. *The Holy Spirit is the efficient cause of success*.—In themselves man's efforts are ineffective. The profound reasoner, Paul, may plant; the eloquent Apollos may water; the straightforward Cephas may labour abundantly; but all is unavailing unless God give the increase. 1 Cor. iii. 7. This truth cannot be kept too prominently before the minds of God's people. All who labour for Christ should do it in dependance upon his Spirit, and with the full expectation that he will grant them success.

2. *Ministers of the Gospel are the Lord's principal builders*.—Paul speaks of himself as "a master-builder," ver. 9, 10. 2 Cor. xii. 19. Ministers are commonly separated from secular callings, and given up to the work of saving souls. Rom. i. 1. They should themselves know experimentally the grace of Christ, that they may be able to teach the

way to heaven to others. It should be theirs to endeavour to magnify their office, and be faithful stewards of the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven. 1 Cor. iv. 1, 2.

8. *All believers are required to be co-workers.*—Jude 23. John speaks of it as being the duty of Christians to be "fellow-helpers to the truth," 3 John 8. 2 Cor. i. 11.

V. THE ERECTION.

1. *It is gradual.*—Already this erection has extended over many generations. Sometimes it has seemed to men as if no progress was being made; but even then it was silently, though slowly, advancing.

2. *It shall be completely successful.*—This is, (1.) *Probable.* On the ground of what has been already done. God's church has braved the fiercest opposition; entered many heathen lands; overthrown some of the mightiest strongholds of iniquity; and thus given proof of an energy which neither earth nor hell can effectually resist. (2.) *Certain.* We infer it from the Divine character. God has covenanted with his Son for this; and being true, must fulfil his engagement. Christ has died for this; and cannot die in vain. The Holy Ghost has been given for this; and will work out the great object of his mission.

APPLICATION.

1. Are you built on Christ? This is a question of great moment. Not to answer it is to be indifferent about your safety.

2. If you are built on Christ, rest on him as long

as you live in this world. He can afford you the greatest stability, strength, and security.

8. If he is not your Foundation, seek to make him such. And, as the time is short, and the interests urgent, do it *now*.

2

SKETCH XXX.

"BOAST NOT OF TO-MORROW."

"Boast not thyself of to-morrow; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth."—PROVERBS xxvii. 1.

"VAIN man would be wise"—"wise above what is written." He wishes to penetrate the mysterious veil which hangs over the future; and when he finds he cannot, is apt to busy himself with useless conjectures. Now if these conjectures were confined to speculative matters, the evil would not be so great; but when they are applied to practical subjects, the consequences are of the most serious character; for then men presume on to-morrow, instead of preparing for it. How full of folly and of danger is such a course! How repugnant to reason and to Scripture; both of which cry aloud in the ears of presumptuous man, "Boast not," &c.

We have here an admonition, and the consideration on which it is founded.

I. AN ADMONITION.—"Boast not," &c.

There is a strong disposition in man to defer

the most weighty duties of to-day until to-morrow, and to rely upon to-morrow's aid for averting evil and delivering from danger. It is probable that this disposition has arisen from the revolution effected by sin in man's nature, wherein the spiritual was subjected to the fleshly. Now the great design of revelation is to correct this tendency, and to induce man to attend to the weightiest matters of life first.

The admonition of the text may be applied to the performance of duties, the execution of projects, the enjoyment of pleasures, and the continuation of privileges.

1. *The performance of duties.*—Every man owes a heavy debt of duty to God, society, and his own soul, which must not be permitted to accumulate. Matt. xxii. 37-40.

2. *The execution of projects.*—We may lawfully form resolutions, and make arrangements for our future guidance; but it should be done in humble dependence on, and entire submission to, the will of Jehovah; ever recollecting that our times are in his hands. Jas. iv. 13-16. This may humble our pride and baffle our curiosity; but the fact that we are in the hands of One who doeth all things well, should more than reconcile us to it.

3. *The enjoyment of pleasures.*—They are not to be anticipated too confidently, lest we be disappointed. We should remember that we are not in Eden, but in a wilderness; and should not say with Job, "I shall die in my nest;" nor with David, "I shall never be moved;" nor be of the number mentioned in Psa. xlix. 6-11. Let us say with the psalmist, "My soul shall make her boast in the Lord."

4. *The continuation of privileges.*—Deferring the preparation of the soul for eternity is boasting ourselves of to-morrow. Many, when the solemn warning, "Prepare to meet thy God," is ringing in their ears, answer in their minds, "I will to-morrow." Does the man of business think of waiting till to-morrow when he has an opportunity of striking a profitable bargain to-day? Why, then, when the honours and happiness of heaven are offered us, should we delay to embrace them? To push on religion from day to day, is the sure way to push it out of life altogether, and to be found at last destitute of "the one thing needful," and dying "as a fool dieth."

II. THE CONSIDERATION.—"For thou knewest not what a day may bring forth."

How true is this statement! We have no need to adduce arguments to prove it, but only facts to illustrate it, which may be found in multitudes.

The consideration of the text applies,

1. *To the world.*—The "wide, wide world" is one vast theatre of change. Physical phenomena, scientific discoveries, social movements, and political revolutions, are ever introducing something new and startling; and these things, at any moment, may seriously affect our interests and destiny.

2. *To the nation.*—Generally blest with peace and plenty, England may at length be doomed to suffer from faction and famine. We do not presume to prophesy, and far be it from us to take delight in depicting scenes of national disaster; but we are a sinful nation—"a people laden with iniquity," and know not how soon, or in what manner, the hand of Divine vengeance may be upon us.

3. *To the neighbourhood.*—An invisible foe, in the shape of pestilence, may invade it. The Angel of Death, like the terrible messenger that slew the first-born of Egypt, or like him who went through the army of Sennacherib,

“And breathed in the face of the foe as he passed,”

may wing his way over the land, alight on the locality of our residence, and, proceeding from street to street and house to house, take away a father here, a mother there, a child yonder. Disaster, in the shape of fire or flood, may visit our neighbourhood. The elements of nature, appointed to minister to our convenience, sometimes become the instruments of destruction. And who can control them? Who can draw a magic circle round the city, town, or village, and say to every accident and epidemic, Thus far shall ye come, but no farther?

4. *To the family.*—Afflictions and bereavements may cause sorrow in the domestic circle. The desire of the eye may be taken away. Esau's unhappy alliances were a grief to Isaac and Rebekah; and pious parents, as in the case of Eli, still have pain from the improper conduct of their irreligious children.

5. *To ourselves personally.*—The uncertainty of which the text speaks pertains to, (1.) The *events of the present life*. Shortly we may have to exchange health for sickness, ease for pain, affluence for poverty, honour for disgrace. Like pilgrims of the desert, exposed to the attacks of banditti and beasts of prey, we are never secure. Like mariners on the main, we cannot tell when the calm may cease and

the storm commence. Like soldiers on campaign, we know not when, nor where, nor how the enemy may attack us. We may learn how variable human fortune is from the histories of Joseph, David, Daniel, Haman, Herod. We live in the same world which once cried concerning Jesus, "Hosanna to the Son of David!" and within a few brief days, shouted, "Away with him! crucify him!" (2.) *The visit of death.* Death is both certain and uncertain: certain as to the event; uncertain as to the time. You are a pilgrim, and may have several miles to travel yet, or there may be but a step between you and death. The next spirit that stands before the bar of God may be yours.

APPLICATION.

1. The great lesson of the text is—*To-day*. In deferring is danger; in promptitude is safety.
2. The assuring truth of the Gospel is—*Safety in Christ*. Though everything else be evanescent, he is "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever."

3

SKETCH XXXI.

RIGHT WORSHIP.

"For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."—MATTHEW xviii. 20.

EVERY Christian is aware of the advantages to be derived from the worship of God. But he knows

also that they can be realized only by the observance of such conditions as the Divine Being himself has prescribed. The text, and similar passages of Scripture, contain instruction and encouragement on this point.

In the words selected, we have the non-essentials, the essential condition, and the blessed result of true worship.

I. THE NON-ESSENTIALS OF TRUE WORSHIP.

"Where two or three are gathered together." We infer from these words,

1. *That the place is not essential.*—"Where." The Jews said that Jerusalem was the place where men ought to worship; and the Samaritans said the same of Mount Gerizim; as if God's presence could be confined to one particular locality. Christ teaches the contrary. John iv. 20-24. If there be the spirit of real devotion, he is present alike in the humblest cottage and the most splendid sanctuary. But if this be wanting, he is not found. He regardeth not outward appearances. Neither painted windows, beautiful architecture, nor enchanting music can attract him. The place may be a consecrated or unconsecrated building, a cottage or a mansion, a church or a chapel, or even in the open air; in the city or in the wilderness—it matters not, for Christ is where his people are, and wills "that men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands," &c., 1 Tim. ii. 8.

2. *That the number assembled is not essential.*—"Two or three." The great Head of the church does not despise a small company of worshippers. "Two or three" may secure his presence and enjoy

his favour as certainly and as fully as two or three thousand. "Christ names the smallest number, for less than two cannot meet."

There are other non-essentials of worship, which, though not specified in the text, it may be proper to name here.

1. *Nothing is said about the time of worship.*—God has not fixed the hour or day. Whenever we are prompted to seek God, we may be certain of his favourable regard. He hears us always. We sometimes ask favours of our fellow-men, and are denied, because we do not ask at the right time; they are engaged or indisposed, and hence do not regard us. Not so God.

2. *No particular attitude, or form of words, in worship is specified.*—Christ does not say whether we shall stand or kneel when we pray; or use a form of prayer or pray without one. And who will say that God can be worshipped in only one posture of the body? Therefore let us not judge one another in these matters, nor make that essential which God has left undetermined. Whatever our attitude or manner of speech, our worship should be spiritual. "God is a Spirit," &c.

II. THE ESSENTIAL CONDITION OF TRUE WORSHIP. —"In my name."

Without this all will be vain. This meeting in Christ's name implies,

1. *A recognition of his Divine character.*—He is a proper object of worship. He is now receiving the adoration of angels and redeemed spirits in heaven. Rev. v. 11-14. And the church on earth mingles its homage with that of the church in heaven. We

should honour him even as we honour the Father. John v. 21-23.

2. *Acceptance of his work.*—When this is done we, (1.) *Rest on his atonement as the ground of salvation.* Glorious privileges are connected with this. John i. 12. (2.) *Avail ourselves of his mediatorial office.* We cannot approach God without an Intercessor. John xiv. 6. He alone fully understands the claims of Deity and the wants of humanity. Through him our prayers become “a sweet savour” unto the Lord. He interprets our groans, presses our suit, pleads our cause, and obtains help for us.

3. *Reception of his teachings.*—This includes, (1.) *Obedience to his commandments.* Not merely to such as enjoin religious worship, but to all those which inculcate the consecration of the heart and life to God’s service. 1 Pet. i. 14. (2.) *Prayer for his promised help.* To sustain, direct, deliver, and encourage. The Holy Spirit is promised for this. John xiv. 16.

III. THE BLESSED RESULT OF TRUE WORSHIP.
—“There am I,” &c.

He is in their midst,

1. *To hear their supplications.*—He listens to their requests on behalf of themselves, their fellow-worshippers, their families, their friends, the church, the world. He hears for the purpose of answering.

2. *To afford them help.*—He is present to give comfort to the mourner, power to the feeble, wisdom to the simple, deliverance to the tempted, rest to the weary. He said to Moses, when about to conduct the hosts of Israel through the dreary desert, “My presence shall go with thee, and I will

give thee rest." He now says the same to all his true worshippers. He is ever at hand, to give them the blessings they need. "Lo I am with you," &c.

3. *To approve and prosper.*—See verse 18. The church meets together not merely for the purpose of personal advantage, as promoted by praise, prayer, and exposition of Scripture; but with the view of devising methods for the advancement of the kingdom of Christ. On such occasions, Divine recognition and guidance, and the signal manifestation of the Holy Spirit, are to be enjoyed.

Mark the *peculiar phraseology* of the promise in the text: "There am I in the midst of you." Not, There will I be, or thither may I come. You shall not have to ask me to make myself known; no, I am there to hear and help you. As God, Christ is everywhere; but as man's Saviour, he is especially present with his people when met in his name.

APPLICATION.

1. Let me ask, Are you now met in Christ's name? Then there is no room for formality, coldness, or wandering thoughts.

2. Have you met with God's people without caring about his presence? Then let me remind you that he is here. Behold him. For you he endured untold agonies. For you he died. For you he pleads with the Father in heaven. Nay, he even now stands at the door of your hearts, asking for admission. Oh, in compassion to your own souls, and in gratitude for his love, let him enter.

"Admit him, lest his anger burn,—
Lest he depart, and ne'er return;
Admit him, or the hour's at hand
When at his door, denied, you'll stand."

SKETCH XXXII.

THE KING OF TERRORS.

"The king of terrors."—Job xviii. 14.

THIS is supposed to be Bildad's description of death. He had spoken well on the calamities which usually overtake a wicked man, and had ignorantly applied his statements to Job. Security, he says, shall forsake his dwelling, and he shall be brought to the king of terrors.

Our text demands seriousness, as it inspires interest. We will notice a few things connected with the history, character, and destiny of the King of Terrors.

I. THE HISTORY OF THE KING OF TERRORS.

1. *He is a king.*—This he is not by right, but by *permission*; not literally, but *figuratively*. Strictly speaking, death is but the termination of our present existence; but the sacred penmen sometimes personify thoughts, inanimate objects, and operations. In this way death has become a king, of ideal form; and we speak of him as an enemy—as having attendants, as riding a pale horse, and as having wide dominions and a lasting name.

2. *His empire is ancient.*—Paul says he has reigned from Adam. Probably he existed in the brute creation long before. Such is thought by some to be "the testimony of the rocks." These rocks present the petrified remains of deeply en-

tombed extinct animals. Be this as it may, it was by man's sin death acquired dominion over the human race. Rom. v. 12. 1 Cor. xv. 21. While obedient, man had access to the tree of life; after he rebelled, he was driven from the garden, and began to die. Death is terrible by reason of transgression. It is this that puts the crown on the King of Terrors.

8. *His reign is universal.*—He has already in the records of his kingdom all that have ever lived, excepting Enoch and Elijah. We are every moment liable to his arrest. He respects no age, rank, or station. What cares he for the noble, the learned, or the beautiful—for chambers of luxury—for beds of down—for instruments of music—for bowls of wine, and rich perfumes? The grave contains

“The wrecks of nations and the spoils of time,
With all the lumber of six thousand years.”

4. *His triumphs are desolations.*—His is the reign of ruin. Abraham sorrowed over his much loved Sarah, and sought a place where he might bury her out of his sight. We have seen the thing we call death—blind, deaf, stiff, pale, cold; yet this is but a little. The dead have never told us how they felt when they breathed their last sad sigh; what was the sensation of the last convulsive struggle—the last pang of dissolving nature; or how the soul issued from the body; or how they felt when an unknown world was opened. Of the ruins of death we know something; but we shall know much more.

II. THE CHARACTER OF THE KING OF TERRORS.

1. *He is inexorable.*—Conquerors have sometimes

been led by policy, humanity, or some other motive, to halt, and present the olive branch to a distressed opponent. Bitter enemies have been induced to suspend hostilities. Not so death. (1.) *Wealth* cannot *bribe* him. It can purchase crowns or pervert justice; but if you were to heap gold as the dust and silver as the sand, you could not procure one hour's respite from death. (2.) *Eloquence* cannot *charm* him. It has swayed the obstinate and the prejudiced, the mob and the army; but it has never yet charmed the dull ear of death. (3.) *Distress* cannot *move* him. The sobs of a mother cannot save her lovely infant from an early grave. The bitter tears of a wife or a husband have no power to shake this enemy's stern resolve.

2. *He is irresistible*.—He takes the monarch from his throne with as much ease as he takes the peasant from his cottage. The world has had its great men, and many inferior ones have trembled at the mention of their names; but Death has gathered in the Alexanders, Cæsars, and Hannibals, and covered them with the dust. Trembling is more befitting the unpardoned than trifling; and courage becomes the Christian. Death's terror is a mountain faith removes. What cares the honest man for the gloomy cell, the sturdy jailer, and the condemning judge? These are terrible to the guilty only.

“If sin be pardoned, I'm secure :
Death has no sting beside.”

III. THE DESTINY OF THE KING OF TERRORS.

1. *It is the purpose of Christ to destroy death*.—The Saviour atoned for sin on the cross, and by his resurrection triumphed over death, hell, and the

grave. He now administers the affairs of his kingdom. "He must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death."

2. *This purpose will be fully accomplished at Christ's second coming.*—He will destroy death at the general resurrection, when he has delivered the dead from his power. Then the career of the King of Terrors will end. He will be compelled by the all-conquering Redeemer, not only to desist from his work of havoc and slaughter, but also to restore the prisoners he has held in his gloomy dominions. In support of the resurrection we have, (1.) Many *testimonies from Scripture*. Job said, "I know that my Redeemer liveth," &c. Isaiah said, "He will swallow up death in victory," &c. Jesus said, "Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth," &c. Paul said, "We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed," &c. John said, "I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened," &c. (2.) *The claims of an equitable government*. Many of the excellent of the earth were wronged and oppressed. They pined in prisons and died in flames. Now shall there be no reckoning hereafter for these—no reward for suffering and faithfulness, and no punishment of prosperous villainy? (3.) *God's ability to accomplish his purposes*. God made the body out of the earth which he had created. It is not more difficult for him to raise a body than to make one. He is everywhere; he knows every particle of human dust, and can raise the dead to life. Jesus raised Lazarus in the presence of his

enemies. Himself also rose from the dead the third day. There is much in nature to illustrate the doctrine of the resurrection. The corn dies and revives again. The flowers fade when winter comes, and return with the spring.

APPLICATION.

Learn :

1. The fearful nature of sin. This is "the sting of death." It gives the monster all his power.
2. The glorious character of the Saviour's work. He came to destroy sin, and all its dark progeny.
3. The importance of a personal interest in the Redeemer. If you trust in him, you shall overcome death; but if you wish to share in the Lord's triumph, you must serve him on earth. And you should begin to do it now. Only those shall stand before the throne of his glory who have bowed before the throne of his grace.

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SKETCH XXXIII.

JUSTIFICATION.

"Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."—ROMANS v. 1.

THE doctrine of justification is very properly regarded as a fundamental article in the Christian's creed. The importance of possessing correct views of it cannot be over estimated. Some of the most pestilential errors with which the Saviour's church

has been afflicted have sprung out of a misconception or wilful denial of what the Bible teaches on this question ; and the friends of revealed truth have had to wage the severest battles that Christendom ever witnessed over this article of faith. Happily for all those who wish to be taught of God, the subject is clearly and fully set forth in the Scriptures ; and nowhere with greater explicitness of statement and force of reasoning than in the Epistle to the Romans. In the text several of its most prominent features are brought to view.

Let us notice the nature, ground, means, and fruit of man's justification before God.

I. THE NATURE OF JUSTIFICATION.

The term "justification" is derived from civil judicature, and describes the act of the judge when he acquits the prisoner. As employed in the New Testament, to set forth the mercy granted by God to the sinner, it is synonymous with pardon, taken in its widest sense. It therefore,

1. *Implies moral relationship between God and man.*—Law must have been given by the former, to be kept by the latter. This law must have been just in its demands, and intelligible in its terms. The Bible gives clear and explicit information on these points. Gen. ii. 15-17.

2. *Presupposes the proof of guilt against man.*—Man broke the first law God gave him. Gen. iii. 6. Every subsequent law of Heaven has been transgressed. Rom. iii. 10-18. There is no difficulty in bringing home to man the sin of disobedience. His sin has been flagrant and oft-repeated.

3. *Consists in deliverance from the charge of sin.*

—This is done by, (1.) The *offences* being *forgiven*. Acts xxvi. 15-18. Eph. i. 7. Col. ii. 13. (2.) The *penalties* being *remitted*. The wrath of God, having its consummation in the eternal death of hell, is the punishment due to disobedience. John iii. 36. Rom. vi. 23. This is taken away from the justified. John iii. 14, 15. Rom. viii. 1. (3.) The *accused* being *received* into *Divine favour*, and *treated* as *just*. Isa. xii. 1. Rom. iv. 5.

II. THE GROUND OF JUSTIFICATION.—“Through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

We may remark,

1. *Justification is not through the mere will of Christ.*

—To effect the salvation of man something more than the mere repentance of the sinner was required. Redemption is spoken of in Scripture as a purchase, the ransom price being the blood and life of Jesus. Matt. xx. 28. 1 Cor. vi. 20. 1 Pet. i. 18, 19.

2. *Justification is not through Christ because of his being more merciful or more powerful than the Father.*

—There cannot be any contradiction, contention, or clashing of interests in the Godhead. “The Lord our God is one Lord.” Redemption is the work of the whole Trinity. 1 Pet. i. 2.

3. *Justification is through the voluntary substitution of Jesus for man, that he might “suffer, the just for the unjust.”*—It was not the Father, nor the Spirit, but the Son, who became incarnate, and died for the sins of the world. “He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him: and with his stripes we are healed,” Isa. liii. 8-10. (1.)

Divine grace is the *originating cause* of our justification. Rom. iii. 24. Tit. iii. 3-7. (2.) The *sacrifice of Jesus* is the *meritorious cause* of our justification. We are saved for his sake. Rom. v. 9, 10. 1 John ii. 12. Eph. iv. 32. (3.) In this scheme we behold the *greatness of God's compassion*. John iii. 16. (4.) This work of redemption by the death of Christ proclaims the *rectitude* of the *Divine government*. It shows God's hatred of sin, his love of holiness, and his determination to punish transgression, and to maintain truth and righteousness for ever. Rom. iii. 25, 26. Col. i. 20. Rom. viii. 2-4. (5.) In this atonement by Jesus there is a *basis of hope* for all sinners. Christ in our nature represents all who partake of that nature. Rom. v. 18. Heb. ii. 9.

III. THE MEANS OF JUSTIFICATION.—“By faith.”

We may observe,

1. *Pardon is on certain terms*.—Human co-operation is required. Acts xx. 21; xxvi. 20. This is fair and equitable. When the gift is of grace, God has a right to make his own conditions. The case is that of a condemned criminal who is entirely at the mercy of his sovereign.

2. *Works are not admissible as a condition of pardon*.—Eph. ii. 9. This may be said, (1.) Of *obedience to the moral law*. Rom. iii. 20. Before conversion, the heart is subject to sin, and cannot serve God. Rom. viii. 7, 8. And even if, by some unaccountable miracle, the sinner's heart could be renewed without his transgressions being forgiven, and he were, from that period to the day of his death, to live a life of spotless virtue, the past would remain

unchanged. His crimes would still stand on heaven's dark roll of human disobedience.

"Present for past can ne'er atone."

(2.) Of the *observance of religious rites*. These may be the ceremonies of the Mosaic law. Gal. ii. 16; iii. 11. Gal. v. 6. 1 Cor. vii. 19. Or they may be the ordinances of the Christian church. Such institutions cannot of themselves lead a soul to salvation. There is no efficacy in them to cover transgression, and impart new life to the sinner. We find help when we find God, and rest in him.

3. *Faith is the instrument by which we obtain justification*.—Beyond question, this is the doctrine of Scripture. Mark xvi. 16. Acts xiii. 39. John iii. 36. Eph. ii. 8. It has been thus really from the beginning of the world. Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, and many others were saved by faith. Rom. iv. 1-3. Heb. xi. 4-39. The chief, if not the only, apparent contradiction to this doctrine, found in the Bible, is Jas. ii. 17-26. But there is no real disagreement between James and the other inspired writers on this subject. James speaks only against the faith that is merely speculative, and for the faith which proves its genuineness by producing in its possessor obedience to God. In noticing this faith, consider, (1.) Its *object*. This is God; but *God in Christ*. We must have faith in God as the Author of the covenant. Heb. xi. 6. John v. 24. And in Christ as the Mediator of that covenant; as the Son of God and the Saviour of the world; and as Prophet, Priest, and King. John vi. 40; xii. 48. Acts vii. 59, 60. Rom. iii. 25. (2.) Its *nature*. Perhaps the one word which best defines faith is

trust. Very frequently the latter is put for the former. Rom. xv. 12. Eph. i. 12. 1 Tim. iv. 10. It includes the reception of God's truth by the intellect, 2 Thess. ii. 13; the submission of the will to God's authority, Acts v. 32, Heb. xi. 8, Rom. vi. 17; the complacency of the heart in God's character and ways, Rom. x. 10, Job. xiii. 15, Psa. i. 2; and the devotion of the life to God's service and glory, John xiv. 15, 1 Cor. x. 31. (3.) *Its office.* It brings us into true heart-fellowship with the Most High. It is the hand of the soul taking hold of the open storehouse of heaven. It is the root of all moral virtues; for it "works by love," and love is the fulfilling of the law. They misunderstand, or else wilfully slander it, who say that it is opposed to good morals. Jas. ii. 26. In Heb. xi. Paul shows that the noblest qualities which have adorned human character have sprung from faith.

IV. THE FRUIT OF JUSTIFICATION.—"Peace with God."

Let us remark,

1. *This peace is a very desirable and important thing.*—Estranged from God, we are lost to everything true and comforting. Having him for our enemy, we cannot rationally look for anything but disaster. Isa. xlv. 9.

2. *Till we become justified, we do not and cannot enjoy this blessing of peace.*—Isa. lvii. 21. Because, (1.) *God is angry with us.* Psa. vii. 11. It is a fearful thing to have him for our foe. (2.) *Sin brings us trouble.* Isa. lvii. 20. Conscience accuses. Evil desires enslave the soul. Satan tyrannizes over us. Fear of death torments. Dreadful fore-

bodings of vengeance are felt. Well may peace flee.

3. *Justification puts us in certain possession of this peace.*—We become reconciled to God. Rom. v. 10. Col. i. 20-22. Sin being forgiven, conscience is pacified, and the sting of death is removed. We enjoy more than the mere termination of God's displeasure. We are made partakers of his nature, and sharers in his great bounty. We have "the witness of the Spirit," and "the adoption of sons," Gal. iv. 4-7. Being made the "temples of the Holy Ghost," flesh and sense are overcome. The present is bright; but the future is glorious. 2 Tim. iv. 6-8.

APPLICATION.

Let us,

1. Reflect seriously on our natural state. What fearful ruin sin has wrought!

2. Consider the greatness of the Saviour's work. It was great in the grace which produced it, the Person who wrought it, the sufferings which accompanied it, and the consequences which flowed from it.

3. Rely on Christ alone for salvation. He stands "before us as the Lord, "mighty to save," and as the only one who can deliver us from the "wrath to come." Great is the joy of those who trust him.

4. Do our utmost to make known to our fellow-men the "redemption that is in Christ Jesus." What greater thing can we do for men than lead them to Him who is the "sure foundation?"

SKETCH XXXIV.

GOSPEL PROSPERITY AMID PERSECUTION.

"But the word of God grew and multiplied."—Acts xii. 24.

God is the great and glorious Patron of the Gospel. It is his to encourage, protect, and succeed it. And this is the reason why, both in ancient and modern times, it has been said of it that, amid its many and violent forms of opposition, it "grew and multiplied."

The words of the text contain a Gospel appellation and a pleasing declaration.

I. A GOSPEL APPELLATION.—"The word of God."

The propriety of this appellation appears when we consider that the Gospel is from God, about God, by God, and to God.

1. *It is from God.*—He is its Author; and as such, we find it to be, (1.) *Authoritative.* It is God speaking; and when "he speaks, it is done;" when he "commands, it stands fast." Deut. xii. 32. (2.) *Majestic.* There is majesty both in its matter and manner. Paul denominates it "the glorious Gospel of Christ," 2 Cor. iv. 4. (3.) *Eternal.* Its utterances are respecting matters of unending duration: the soul; heaven; hell; God; holy angels; lost souls. It is the only word that speaks clearly of these things 1 Pet. i. 25. Rev. xiv. 6.

2. *It is about God.*—It represents him as, (1.) The *first* Being. Isa. xli. 4; xliii. 10; xlviii. 12. (2.) The *greatest* Being. Dent. xxxii. 39. Jer. xxxii. 17-19, 27. Luke i. 37. (3.) The *best* Being. 1 Sam. ii. 2. Isa. lxiii. 7.

3. *It is by God.*—By him it is, (1.) *Given*. 2 Tim. iii. 16, 17. David said, "The Spirit of the Lord spake by me," &c., 2 Sam. xxiii. 2. And Peter declared, "For the prophecy came not in old time," &c., 2 Pet. i. 21. (2.) *Kept in existence*. No production has been so assailed as has the blessed word of truth. Yet it lives. And so it must, for it is declared to be everlasting. 1 Pet. i. 23, 25. Rev. xiv. 6.

"In vain shall Satan rage
Against a book divine,
Where wrath and lightning guard the page
Where beams of mercy shine."

(3.) *Made effective to the accomplishment of its purposes.* Its great Author has declared, "For as the rain cometh down," &c., Isa. lv. 10, 11. Jer. xxiii. 29. Col. i. 5, 6.

4. *It is to God.*—His glory is promoted, (1.) In the *gratitude* it calls forth. For the gift of so precious a boon. David would acknowledge its excellence when he said, "Thy word is a lamp to my feet," &c., Psa. cxix. 105. The Christian feels that

"Not honey to the taste
Affords so much delight,
Nor gold that has the furnace past
So much allures the sight."

(2.) In the *adoration* it excites. Revealing the only perfect Being, possessed of unbounded power, good-

ness, mercy, majesty, glory, holiness, wisdom, and truth, the believer is constrained to say, "I will extol thee, my God, O King," &c., *Psa. cxlv. 1, 2.*

II. A PLEASING DECLARATION.—It "grew and multiplied."

Here is,

1. *Something intimated.*—That the Gospel had to contend with opposition. The first word in the text intimates this—"But." The context plainly teaches it. *Ver. 1-23.* This has always been the portion of the Gospel. It has had to suffer, (1.) From *avowed enemies*. Infidels. Profane characters. Often civil powers. Actuated by ignorance; prejudice. (2.) From *false friends*. Church of Rome. Latter-day Saints. Individual hypocrites. Actuated by envy; self-interest.

2. *Something affirmed.*—(1.) It "*grew*." Not literally. It is what it was, and what it always will be. It must neither be lessened nor increased. *Deut. iv. 2. Rev. xxii. 18, 19.* The blessed results of its publication grew. First stages were left behind; and to knowledge of the truth were added conversion, growth in grace, sanctification. This progress was *continual*: it "grew," as the single corn advances from the seed to the full ripe ear. (2.) It "*multiplied*." In the number of its believers. Many accessions were made from men of all classes, localities, and dispositions; but all of whom displayed the same great Christian characteristics, being earnest in God's service, loving each other, bearing persecution with meekness, and many of them even ready to die for Christ's sake.

IMPROVEMENT.

1. See the superiority of the Gospel. You cannot speak too reverentially of it, for it is the word of Jehovah.

2. Learn the futility of opposing it. It possesses a Divine energy, by means of which it will live and reign when all its opposers and its counterfeits are heard of no more.

3. Regard it as your duty to publish it. Thousands never heard its joyful sound. God has chosen you to make it known. Will you be faithful to your call?

SKETCH XXXV.

"THE HORRIBLE PIT."

"I waited patiently for the Lord; and he inclined unto me, and heard my cry. He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings. And he hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God: many shall see it, and fear, and trust in the Lord."—PSALM xl. 1-3.

MAN is a reflecting being. When he chooses, he can live in the past. This is a very wonderful endowment. By its aid a great amount of joy or sorrow may be pressed into one short hour of life. What would the sinner not give to be rid of the evil treasures of his memory, and the upbraidings of his conscience? On the other hand, how pleasing

are the recollections of the saint. He delights to review God's dealings with him. The psalmist appears to have been engaged in an occupation of this kind when he penned the text. The authorship of the psalm is generally ascribed to David; and it is supposed by some writers that in the early part of it he refers to his salvation from the guilt, shame, affliction, and sorrow of his unlawful intercourse with Uriah's wife. If so, he depicts the condition and describes the deliverance of a backslider. We will view the passage before us in this light.

I. THE STATE THE PSALMIST WAS IN.—“An horrible pit,” &c.

It was,

1. *A fallen state.*—A “pit.” To lose religion is indeed to fall. It is the worst calamity that can happen to a man in this life. Lam. iv. 1, 2. The loss of riches, or health, or social rank is a trifle compared with this; for it is the forfeiture of peace, joy, honour, and the hope of eternal glory.

2. *A miserable state.*—“An horrible pit”—“a pit of noises”—a place full of startling echoes and fearful reverberations. The backslider is often made wretched by the contrast between his present and past state, and disturbed by the sound of his coming doom. Heb. x. 26-29. Darkness, loneliness, want, and danger are among the sad discomforts of a pit. Isa. xxiv. 17-22.

3. *A defiled state.*—“Miry.” By many Christ is given up for money, fleshly pleasures, and worldly honours; and with these they become entangled and defiled. Their hearts are impure and their

hands filthy. Sin makes men loathsome; and few appear more so than he who has once worn the spotless robes of Jesus, and then returned to the vile practices of the disobedient. Matt. xii. 43-45.

4. *A helpless state.*—"Miry clay." A man in this condition is continually sinking deeper into difficulty. The figure truly represents the human soul under the influence of sin. Man is so wondrously constituted that we can set no bounds to his capabilities for doing and enduring evil. Nor is it true that when he has gone a certain length in iniquity, he will halt and return. Jer. xiii. 23. Attempts at self-reformation, made in our own strength, always fail, and generally end in our becoming more deeply involved in misery and wrong. Jer. x. 23. Rom. ix. 16.

II. THE MEASURES THE PSALMIST ADOPTED.—
"I waited," &c.

1. *He cried unto the Lord.*—This shows, (1.) *Conviction* of his *lost state*. It is sometimes difficult to get a backslider to look into his condition. (2.) *A knowledge of God as the helper*. By "line upon line" God has sought to impress us with the great truth that salvation is in his name. Isa. xlv. 22. Matt. xi. 28-30. (3.) *A desire for aid*. This was shown by sending up his "cry" to God. (4.) *A readiness to use such means as were at hand*. There is very little, if any, choice of means for a man in a pit, who, the more he strives to extricate himself, the deeper he sinks. What can he do but lift his voice to those above the pit's mouth, and persuade them to deliver him? For the soul lost in sin there is no remedy but the mercy of God, and no

means of getting help but by casting itself on Jesus. 1 Cor. iii. 11.

2. *He waited patiently for the Lord.*—"In waiting I waited." By this language he intimates, doubtless, that his heart was completely broken, and his spirit thoroughly subdued. He felt in the position of a person who beholds every door closed against him except one. He fully coincided with the Divine terms. It is well to be brought to the footstool of Jehovah. Nothing but God's truth, in the hand of the eternal Spirit, can thus thoroughly melt the human heart.

III. THE DELIVERANCE THE PSALMIST REALIZED.
—"He inclined unto me," &c.

1. *He was heard.*—It is sometimes difficult for a person in a deep pit to make himself heard. But when our prayer for help is made to God, he is always near to deliver us. Luke xi. 9, 10. No anxious, confiding heart cries to him in vain. Psa. l. 15.

2. *He was lifted up out of the pit.*—"He brought me up." His sin was pardoned, its guilt taken away, its power broken, and its curse removed. The salvation which the Gospel brings is most positive and striking. 1 John i. 7. The difference between sin and grace is as great as that between the gloom and misery of a dungeon, and the sweet perfumes and golden glory of a summer's morn.

3. *He was established.*—"Set my feet upon a rock," &c. Here again we see the greatness of the psalmist's change: from the yielding clay to the firm rock. We are not to understand him to teach that he could fall no more; but that God had set him right, and

put within his reach the means of keeping so. Following God's counsel, men have been enabled to withstand the most formidable enemies. 2 Pet. i. 10.

4. *He was made joyful.*—"He hath put a new song," &c. Every regenerated person is made to rejoice. Isa. xii. 8. Rom. xiv. 17. Gal. v. 22. 1 Pet. i. 8. The recovered backslider may be said to sing a new song—the song of restoration. Still the "new song" is one of praise to God.

5. *He was made the means of good to others.*—"Many shall see it," &c. Many shall, (1.) *See* this deliverance. Religion is seen to advantage in what it does for its possessors. (2.) *Fear.* To grieve so good and great a Being as God. To fall into sin. Sin never seems so hateful as when God saves us from it. (3.) *Trust* in the Lord. Because of his readiness to pity and help, and his ability to save all who call upon him.

APPLICATION.

1. To the *believer.*—Be careful to stand fast in the liberty of Christ. Watch and pray.

2. To the *broken-hearted backslider.*—Call on God for help. He will hear and save.

3. To the *impenitent backslider.*—Recollect you are in an horrible pit. Pray God to show you your state, and then deliver you from it.

SKETCH XXXVI.

"SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES."

"Search the Scriptures."—JOHN v. 39.

God, having given us a revelation of his will, it is incumbent upon us to have recourse to it for information on those subjects on which it speaks. And in order to receive the full benefit of its teachings, we should be careful not to allow our prejudices or passions to mislead us in reference to its all-important topics. It is evident from many portions of the New Testament, that the Jews fell into this error, and so failed to perceive in Christ the Messiah of whom their prophets had so frequently and clearly spoken. In the context, Jesus reproves them for this; and follows up the reproof by the exhortation of the text—"Search the Scriptures."

With the view of assisting and encouraging you in the performance of this duty, let us lay down some rules for searching the Scriptures, and assign some reasons for its performance.

I. LAY DOWN SOME RULES FOR SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES.

We should search them,

1. *Statedly*.—The Bible is not a mere collection of moral and religious aphorisms, or of fragments of ecclesiastical history; but a compact and complete record of God's moral government relating to

the salvation of man. As such, it should not be studied by fits and starts. Let some part of every day be devoted to this high and beneficial employment. Let it be regarded as being as necessary to the life of the soul as food is to the body.

2. *Connectedly*.—A great proportion of the contents of the Scriptures is of an historical character; and even that which is not, is so intimately connected with circumstances of time and place, that to understand it fully requires a knowledge of its historical relation. To read the Bible chronologically will be found very advantageous. A method of Bible reading often adopted and highly recommended, is that of perusing portions of the Old and New Testaments conjointly: as, Isaiah with John, Leviticus with Hebrews, &c.

3. *Carefully*.—Our carefulness in reading should have reference to two things: (1.) To *understand*. The Bible contains many things of the greatest moment to man, and which he cannot comprehend so as to reap all the advantage they offer, without much effort. (2.) To *retain*. 1 Cor. xv. 1, 2. Some, to excuse their recollecting so little of what they read and hear, complain of their memories. Yet they recollect a multitude of things. This shows the natural faculty is not wanting, but only requires properly directing.

4. *Humbly*.—It is well for us to remember, (1.) That we are in the *position of condemned criminals*. We are subject to the pleasure of the Judge, and the Bible contains the declaration of his will concerning us. "God resisteth the proud." (2.) That we are *ignorant*, as well as guilty. Hence we should evince a teachable disposition. Many fail here, pleading

the claims of reason. The statements of the Bible are not contrary to reason, though far above it.

"Where Reason fails, with all her powers,
There Faith prevails and Love adores."

An example of a teachable spirit is furnished by the Eunuch, Acts viii. 30, 31; and Apollos, a learned and eloquent man, submitted to be taught, Acts xviii. 24, 25.

5. *Practically.*—It cannot be imagined that the Scriptures have been written only to amuse, or to inform the mind, or to furnish materials for controversy. Its warnings, threatenings, and promises are given in order that they may be observed. John xiii. 17. Rev. xxii. 14.

6. *Prayerfully.*—Your position is that of the blind man mentioned in Scripture. Mark x. 51, 52. When you feel it to be such, and are led to offer the same petition which he offered, then shall your understanding be enlightened. James i. 5.

II. ASSIGN SOME REASONS FOR SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES.

1. *Because of the interesting views they give us of the Divine character.*—Even the wisest philosophers and profoundest scholars of ancient times were unable to do more than utter conjectures respecting the great First Being. But if we turn our attention to the Scriptures, we shall be compelled to acknowledge the convincing proofs of his moral government, and to admire the endearing character which he is represented as possessing towards his creatures. Well might the regal prophet exclaim, "The entrance of thy word giveth light."

2. *Because of the information they give of the origin, career, and destiny of man.*—Whence did man originate? What is his destiny? are enquiries naturally suggesting themselves to a thoughtful mind. But the history of human knowledge clearly shows that man, unblest with the aid of revelation, has never yet been able to furnish answers to them. The Bible, however, sheds clear and abundant light upon them; and represents us as capable of knowing, loving, and adoring our Creator; and as destined, if faithful and obedient, to dwell for ever in the presence of God in heaven.

3. *Because of the light they throw on many of God's providential dispensations.*—We see, from certain facts recorded in Scripture, how God raises up men for the accomplishment of special purposes. Joseph. Moses. Cyrus. And we are taught by numerous declarations, that what we call the untoward events of life are working out great and glorious results. Rom. viii. 28. 2 Cor. iv. 17, 18.

4. *Because they teach the sublimest morality.*—The principles, motives, and character of Scripture morality all differ from the cold and heartless systems of mere philosophical dogmatists. No merely human system of ethics equals that taught by Christ—"Thou shalt love," &c., Matt. xxii. 37-39. "Thy commandments," says the psalmist, "are true and righteous altogether," Ps. xix. 7-11.

5. *Because they unfold the glorious scheme of redemption.*—Reason, aided probably by tradition, has acknowledged the sinfulness of man, and his need of atonement. Hecatombs of victims have bled, and offerings the most expensive have been presented, to propitiate offended deities. Now the

Bible brings to light *one* Sacrifice for sin, and thus makes clear the way to heaven. Heb. x. 12 14.

6. *Because they direct our attention to the solemnities of eternity.*—Man very strongly desires a life beyond this. Theories and speculations about it have been numerous. But without the Scriptures, no just conceptions can be formed of the joys awaiting the righteous in the world to come, or of the misery of the impenitent in that state where “their worm dieth not, and their fire is not quenched.” And when, by Divine sanction, the “holy men of God” record the unalterable rule of his decision, we have the declarations of the Judge of quick and dead to encourage the sincere believer, and to arrest the career of the hardened transgressor.

APPLICATION.

1. Learn to set a proper value on the Scriptures. They are given by God—given to show unto men the way of salvation.

2. Learn to study them in preference to any human productions. Few are the compositions worthy of the exhortation—“Search.”

§

SKETCH XXXVII.

“ALLELUIA.”

“And after these things, I heard a great voice of much people in heaven, saying, Alleluia.”—REVELATION xix. 1.

HALLELUJAH in the Old Testament, and *alleluia* in the New, are the Hebrew and Greek forms of ex-

pressing the sentiment, "Praise ye the Lord." The former was a common exclamation of joy and praise in the ancient Jewish worship; and the latter has long been used, commonly in devotional psalmody, in the Christian church. And in this particular the church below but resembles the church above. "I heard," says John, "a great voice," &c. Surely, therefore, there can be no reasonable objection against the proper use of the term in religious worship on earth.

Let us notice,

I. THE NATURE OF SACRED PRAISE.

Praise in general is an acknowledgment of the excellency of a person or action. Sacred praise is the acknowledgment of the *perfections*, the *works*, and the *benefits* of God. It is called by various names in the Scriptures, such as—"fruit of the lips," "voice of praise," "garment of praise," "sacrifices of joy," &c. It is more than *thanksgiving*, though it includes it. "Thanksgiving expresses our relish of the sweetness of the benefits received: but praise rises above all selfish regards, and directly terminates on the greatness and amiableness of God." Thankfulness has for its object the *relative* goodness of God: but praise, the *absolute* goodness of God, as it is the excellency of his nature. Praise is the highest service which man can render to God.

II. THE OBJECT OF SACRED PRAISE.—Jehovah.

He is the only proper Object of worship. Sacred praise may not be rendered to,

1. *Man*.—This would be to give to the creatur

the due of the Creator. *Secular* praise may be awarded to those who deserve it. We can see no wrong in giving such to men who, like Wellington, Peel, Bacon, Milton, Locke, Bunyan, Wesley, Clowes, and others, are renowned for their noble achievements. Praise them, if you will, in prose and verse, in speech and song, in monument and history. But then do it to them as *men*, and not as deities.

2. *Nature*.—The pantheist may give praise to nature, for that is his god. But the Christian, whose God is the Author of nature, may give it only to him. We are not insensible to the glories of nature. We confess that its cloud-capped mountains, lovely vales, grassy mounds, meandering rills, ocean waters, flowery carpet, variegated verdure, and its thousand other beauties, fill us with adoring praise. But of what, and to whom? Certainly not of these works themselves, but of the Worker—not to nature, but to nature's God.

3. *Revelation*.—Though a transcript of Jehovah's mind, it is not the proper object of sacred praise. Men justly admire, respect, and credit the Bible. It is worthy of universal eulogy simply as a book. What a compendium of history, jurisprudence, poetry, prophecy, philosophy, morality, and religion! As such, it is entitled to the acknowledgments of sovereigns and senators, statesmen and philosophers, poets and orators, professors and students, Christians and infidels. But viewed as a Divine revelation, it is much more deserving of human admiration. It is not, however, *the* nor *an* object of sacred praise. We have no scriptural warrant for such a thing. Revelation is an object of faith, not of praise.

As we have shown that neither man, nature, nor revelation is the right object of Christian praise, let us next show that,

4. *Deity is that Object.*—"Praise ye the Lord." There is no difficulty in distinguishing the Being here referred to. The Triune-God is to be adored. *All* sacred praise is his due, (1.) For *what he is in himself*. Think of his majesty, glory, greatness, holiness, wisdom, power, goodness, mercy, truth, love, justice. (2.) For *what he has done*. Consider that creation, providence, redemption, salvation are all his works. (3.) For *what he has prepared for his people hereafter*. Contemplate the glory to be revealed, the crown to be worn, the sceptre to be waved, the inheritance to be possessed, the heaven to be enjoyed for ever. Come, then,

"Let us love, and sing, and wonder,
Let us praise the Saviour's name;
He has hush'd the Law's loud thunder,
He has quench'd mount Sinai's flame:
He has wash'd us with his blood,
He has brought us nigh to God."

III. THE OFFERERS OF SACRED PRAISE.—"Praise ye the Lord."

When hallelujah was sung in Hebrew worship, it meant that all who engaged therein offered praise. The term, as used by the heavenly host, signified that the "much people" who joined their voices were offerers of praise. And praise to God should be given on earth,

1. *By all men.*—Irrespective of character, caste, circumstances, or age. Psa. cvii. 8. Even babes and sucklings may perfect praise. Psa. viii. 2.

In Christ's day the children cried, "Hosannah" in the temple. Matt. xxi. 15.

2. *By saints especially.*—For redemption, regeneration, and the support and consummation of the Divine life within them. Psa. xxx. 4; xcvi. 12.

IV. THE MANNER OF OFFERING SACRED PRAISE.

It may be offered up *anywhere*, for God is everywhere, Psa. cxxxix. 7-12. At *any time*, for God is ever present with his people, Matt. xviii. 20. But not *anyhow*. It must be,

1. *With the understanding.*—Praise to God must be offered intelligently. We should know why we praise him. If it be in verse and song, let us understand the sentiments.

2. *With the whole heart.*—All praise should come from the heart. The praise of the lips is an abomination to God, unless joined with the melody of the heart. First let the heart feel, and then let the tongue sing. But how often half-hearted praise is offered!

3. *Perpetually.*—As one of the poets says,

"Praise must never cease to flow,
'Tis the tribute that we owe."

God deserves daily praise. The Jewish priests and Levites, at the feast of unleavened bread, "praised the Lord day by day." John tells us that in heaven the four beasts "rest not day and night," Rev. iv. 8. And, Christian, can you do less than render daily praise? Make the language of Watts yours:

"I'll praise my Maker while I've breath;
And when my voice is lost in death,
Praise shall employ my nobler powers."

APPLICATION.

Learn that sacred praise is,

1. A *Divine right*.—God claims it. Revelation prescribes it. Reason approves of it. Conscience sanctions it.

2. A *proper exercise* for the church.—It was offered in the ancient Jewish church. It is offered in all Christian churches. It is offered in the heavenly church.

3. *Every man's duty*.—Every man is related and obligated to God. The Scriptures enjoin it. Universal Christian practice asserts it.

9

SKETCH XXXVIII.

THE DESPENDING SOUL ENCOURAGED.

"Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God."—
PSALM xlii. 11.

NEITHER royalty nor righteousness exempts from trouble. David possessed both; and yet he was subject to trial, and compelled to utter his complaints, as in the words before us.

In dwelling upon them, let us consider the state enquired about; the course recommended; the assurance given; and the relationship indicated.

I. THE STATE ENQUIRED ABOUT.—Depression of soul. "Cast down."

It is well for us to converse with our spirits. The practice is both wise and wholesome. Such a state as is spoken of may arise from,

1. *Bodily affliction*.—All are aware of the existence of physical suffering; and such is the close union of body and mind, that when the one suffers, the other is affected.

2. *Poverty*.—Man, being dependent for many of his earthly comforts upon "the bread that perisheth," the withdrawal of "the staff of life" often occasions him inquietude. Prov. xxx. 7-9.

3. *Disappointment in business*.—As capital is invested, and credit has to be maintained, in trade, it is not to be wondered at that commercial reverses should occasion mental depression.

4. *Desertion of friends*.—We are formed for friendships, and take pleasure in them: their sudden and undeserved termination must, then, cause us pain.

5. *Death of kindred*.—Jacob mourned over Rachel; David grieved at the loss of his son; and Mary and Martha sorrowed at the death of Lazarus.

6. *Temptations*.—Satanic harassments impart a peculiar pain, and throw a gloom over the soul.

7. *Persecution*.—The unlawfulness of maltreatment for conscience sake, and the temporal loss it often brings with it, are sources of grief to the pious man.

8. *A knowledge of personal unworthiness*.—Through the force of ignorance and temptation, failings in Christian duty are almost of daily occurrence. To a sincere mind, this is a source of deep regret, especially when it reflects upon the goodness of God, and the injury often inflicted by them upon the interests of his cause.

II. THE COURSE RECOMMENDED.—“Hope thou in God.”

Let us notice,

1. *The nature of hope in God.*—It consists of, (1.) *Expectation of good from him.* Rom. viii. 24, 25. (2.) *Trust in him.* This includes reliance on his power. Confidence in his goodness, wisdom, and faithfulness. Heb. vi. 18, 19.

2. *The reasons for cherishing this hope.*—Because, (1.) *We need help.* As is seen in our natural imperfections, and our frequently recurring emergencies. (2.) *God has encouraged us to look to him for help.* He has invited hope. He has wrought hope in us. He sustains hope. He is able and willing to fulfil hope. Isa. lvii. 13. 1 Pet. i. 3-5.

III. THE ASSURANCE GIVEN.—“Thou shalt yet praise him.”

Praise may be an expression of gladness, gratitude for help, an act of homage, or an offering of service. Perhaps the first is meant here.

1. *God will honour confidence in himself.*—Matt. viii. 5-13. Job was blessed with great prosperity in consequence of his unshaken trust in God. Abraham was called the friend of God, because he believed in him.

2. *God's arrangement is, that our trials shall end shortly.*—They are represented as light and momentary. 2 Cor. iv. 17. They are but disciplinary, not permanent. When they have answered their purpose, they shall cease. The service of the soldier on campaign is dangerous and toilsome; but is followed by peace, rest, and honour.

3. *The future is full of all that is calculated to give*

joy and excite praise.—Very frequently, on earth, we see the hand of God in our affairs, and are filled with astonishment and gratitude. Numbers of God's people, in the last hour of life, have triumphed and rejoiced greatly at the complete victory he has given them over every fear and foe; and the visions and foretastes they have had of the better country have been such as to enrapture their souls. But heaven is the place where their praises shall be the sweetest, purest, and most lasting. Rev. ii. 10. 2 Tim. iv. 6-8.

IV. THE RELATIONSHIP INDICATED.—“Who is the health,” &c. We have here a statement,

1. *Of religious appropriation.*—“My God.” Some men would consider themselves happy if they could say, This house, land, inheritance, crown, throne, kingdom is mine; but he only is truly blessed who can say, This God is mine. Religion enables us to do this. Ps. xliii. 14.

2. *Of the influence of true piety.*—“The health of my countenance.” “I shall have the light and help of his countenance, which will produce a salutary influence on my countenance.” God is the delight of the pious soul. His favour produces cheerfulness, and tends to long life. Ps. xci. 16.

APPLICATION.

1. We may *expect* our *souls* to be *disquieted*.—David felt it, as have all good men since his day.

2. In such disquietude let us *trust* in *God*.—He is always nigh to cheer; and if he do not rescue, he will sustain.

3. Thus trusting in him, we shall “*rejoice in tribulation*,” and enjoy uninterrupted blessedness in the skies.

SKETCH XXXIX.

THE THORN IN THE FLESH.

2 CORINTHIANS xii. 2-9.

PAUL was a judicious man; and like one, he acted upon the saying of Solomon—"There is a time to keep silence, and a time to speak." Fourteen years before he wrote the words of the text, he had been favoured as perhaps no other man had been—permitted to have a view of heaven. The wonderful sights which he then beheld had been kept within his own breast until the date of this epistle; when, the Corinthians calling in question his apostleship, he judged it proper to refer to his having seen them, amongst other arguments, in proof of his being Divinely called to the office of apostle.

In making use of this argument, he adverts to a vision, and speaks of its results. To these two points let us turn your attention.

I. PAUL'S VISION.

In relating it, the apostle speaks of things certain, things uncertain, and things indescribable.

1. *Things certain.*—"I knew a man in Christ, fourteen years ago," &c. Here he speaks of, (1.) *A person.* He represents him as "a man in Christ;" that is, one united to Christ. That this "man in Christ" was Paul himself there can be no doubt; indeed, in the seventh verse he uses the first person.

His modesty led him to employ this method of representation. John, no doubt from the same motive, makes use of it also, in John xiii. 23, 24; xix. 26; xxi. 20. (2.) A person *highly exalted*. "Caught up into the third heaven;" "into paradise." There is reference in the Bible to three heavens: the first is the ærial, or atmospheric; the second, the starry, or astronomical; the third, the abode of God and the glorified. Into this last was Paul privileged to enter. And what a sight must have met his eye! "He was caught up into paradise." Paradise is defined as meaning "a garden of pleasure;" and is but another word employed for describing the same place of happiness.

2. *Things uncertain*.—"Whether in the body," &c. He did not know whether, for awhile, the soul was separated from the body, and taken to heaven; or whether both body and soul were exalted thither. At any rate, it appears he thought it possible for the soul to exist apart from the body. And where else is this truth taught but in the Bible? Certainly not in infidel productions, which say of man, "Put him in the grave, and he's done with." Thank God! Christian, your departed friends are living, though their bodies lie in the narrow house of the tomb. 2 Cor. v. 8.

3. *Things indescribable*.—"Heard unspeakable words," &c. God chooses to have many things hidden from men. The disciples were strictly charged not to reveal the secrets of the transfiguration; and frequently were they commanded not to tell of the mighty works which their Lord did. Heaven's glory is one of these hidden things. And very good reasons appear to us—if not to scoffers—

why it should be. (1.) Because it is God's will that we should "walk by *faith*, not by sight." Self-interest merely must not actuate men in seeking heaven, in whatever else it may prompt them. (2.) Because, as at present constituted, we *cannot comprehend heaven's glory*. The marginal reading is *possible* instead of "lawful." We receive information by words; and if one possessing such command of them as Paul, could not find sufficient to set forth the things he saw and heard, it is not very likely that we should have capacity for comprehending them. And had it been possible for Paul to have described, and for the Corinthians to have understood them, such, we have reason to believe, is their glory and grandeur, that very likely the latter would have regarded the former as telling an idle tale, or indulging an uncontrollable imagination.

II. THE RESULTS OF PAUL'S VISION.—"And lest I should be exalted above measure," &c., v. 7-9.

These were suffering, prayer, and submission.

1. *Suffering*.—"A thorn in the flesh," &c. Let us enquire into, (1.) Its *nature*. It was some *painful* affliction. The metaphor employed—that of a thorn—conveys the idea "that the trial to which he refers was as painful and troublesome as a sharp thorn would be in the flesh." It was probably a *bodily* affliction: "a thorn in the *flesh*." What was the precise nature of it cannot be ascertained. Many have conjectured respecting it; some supposing it was the headache; others, the earache; others, the gout; others, an affection of the eye; others, some unruly lust; Baxter, that it was the stone and gravel; Doddridge and many others.

that it was a paralytic stroke, producing stammering and a disfigured countenance. Which of these suppositions is correct, or whether any of them be, is a matter of no moment. The words, "The messenger of Satan to buffet me," are no doubt intended to convey the same idea as "the thorn in the flesh." (2.) Its *design*. "Lest I should be exalted," &c. Ordinary Christians are exposed to inflation; but to one so highly favoured as Paul, the danger would seem to be most imminent. To prevent this the thorn was given.

2. *Prayer*.—The experience of the trial led to the practice of prayer. "For this thing," &c. Paul's prayer was, (1.) *Offered to Christ*. "I besought the Lord." That Christ is here intended is generally admitted. If we have so high an authority for praying to Christ, we need not hesitate to offer our petitions to him. (2.) *Repeated*. "Thrice." It is right to persevere in our prayers until God either sends an answer to them, or gives us to see that it is his will not to grant the blessings we ask. God did not grant Paul's first petition, neither does he always grant ours. (3.) *Answered*. Not as Paul desired, but in a better way. The thorn was to be retained, but grace given to bear it. Better have thorn and grace than no thorn and no grace. "But would it not be better to have grace and no thorn?" When God sees that his people can enjoy prosperity without requiring humiliation; he will cease to give thorns in the flesh. But how many are there who can?

3. *Submission*.—"Most gladly," &c. Observe, (1.) The *nature* of this submission. It is a glorying in *infirmities*: those for which other men would

no doubt despise Paul. He would *glory* in them. It is common for men to deplore—nay, sometimes to murmur against them. And he would do this *heartily*—"most gladly:" feeling them to be a positive benefit to him. How widely different does Paul's appear from the little more than pretended submission to the Divine will of some. (2.) The *motive* of it. "That the power of Christ," &c. To honour Jesus was Paul's chief object both in life and death; and cheerful submission to the Divine infliction of the thorn in the flesh gave him a favourable opportunity for its attainment; for thereby the power of Christ to sustain in the most powerful trials was seen. And this honouring of Divine grace would be *constant*: the power of Christ would "rest" upon him—be always visible while a sojourner in a world of trial.

APPLICATION.

This subject presents us with,

1. An unparalleled instance of *Christian humility*.—Paul, the most highly favoured of men—permitted, as he was, to visit heaven and return to earth—glorying in infirmities! Behold him, also, keeping his exalted privilege a secret for fourteen years; and only then making it known modestly and from necessity.

2. An example of *Christian submission*.—Paul was willing to bear so acute a trial as is best set forth by the metaphor of a thorn, and that to the end of life, because God willed it.

3. A proof of the *beneficial tendency* of trial.—The thorn brought grace which, but for it, Paul would never have received. And no Christian ever en-

dared in a proper spirit the trials which God sent him, without experiencing that they were more advantageous than even his prosperity and ease.

SKETCH XL.

NOAH IN THE ARK.

"And the Lord said unto Noah, Come thou and all thy house into the ark; for thee have I seen righteous before me in this generation."—GENESIS vii. 1.

To observe the character and trace the conduct of the godly, in times of general degeneracy, is an interesting and beneficial employment. By the assistance of Holy Scripture, we are enabled to do this in regard to many of the ancient worthies; amongst whom a prominent position is claimed for Noah. The text furnishes an opportunity for this exercise; in engaging in which, let us direct your attention to Noah's character and privileges.

I. NOAH'S CHARACTER.—"Righteous."

This includes,

1. *Faith in the Divine word.*—(1.) In its *truth*. If it be not true, it is nothing better than a dead letter. But that it is, the believer has all proper and necessary evidence. (2.) In its *power*. Coming from a Divine Source, it must have some peculiar influence over the hearts and lives of those under its dominion. Psa. xix. 7, 8. Heb. xi. 7.

2. *Renovation by Divine grace.*—By nature carnal, we cannot be righteous until renewed; and this can only be effected by the power of Divine grace upon the heart. Eph. ii. 1-5.

3. *Obedience to the Divine will.*—This comprises, (1.) *Submission.* Believing God to be perfect, we must acknowledge that he cannot err, and will not do wrong. (2.) *Service.* The Christian is made for activity. God has many spheres of labour for him here. Thankfulness to his great Benefactor, as well as regard to his own safety, should prompt him to occupy as many of them as practicable. Noah, by erecting the ark, both obeyed the Divine command, and secured his own preservation.

4. *Gratitude for Divine goodness.*—God's goodness comes to us, (1.) In *creation.* (2.) In *providence.* (3.) In *redemption.* For all these it is our duty to give thanks to him continually. Psa. l. 14, 23; lxix. 30, 31. Eph. v. 19, 20. Heb. xiii. 15, 16.

5. *Enjoyment of special Divine regard.*—(1.) On *earth.* The privileges of adoption, counsel, protection, and an abiding sense of God's favour, filling the heart with joy. (2.) In *heaven.* Mal. iii. 16, 17. John xiv. 2, 3. 1 Pet. i. 3-5. Noah enjoyed distinguished favours here, and has doubtless found higher honours in the world above.

II. NOAH'S PRIVILEGES.—“Come thou,” &c.

1. *Their nature.*—He was, (1.) *Honoured to build an ark for God.* This was a great work. In it he needed and received Divine instruction. He also served the world greatly by its erection. (2.) He was *preserved from the flood* in that ark. As a reward of his obedience. (3.) His *family were saved*

with him. Good men often procure privileges for their children. Abraham did. (4.) He was made the *founder of a new race*. This honour transcends that of the head of a proud and powerful clan.

2. *Their source*.—"For thee have I found," &c. They were given by God, but obtained by Noah's piety. (1.) *Piety is noticed and accepted by God*. He regards every act of obedience to himself, and of love to his church, as so much service done for him; and does not fail to give pleasing evidence of his approval of it. (2.) *Religion secures for its possessor ample recompence*. Often in the shape of exemption from personal and social calamity. Noah was saved from a watery grave, in which all were entombed save eight. Always, in the enjoyment of a good conscience, and bright hopes of everlasting safety and glory.

APPLICATION.

1. Can it be said of us that we are *righteous before God*? We are hastening to scenes surpassing in solemnity and importance those of the flood; and should know whether we are prepared to take part in them. Unless righteous, we are not safe.

2. If we are *not* righteous, we may be made so by Christ. He is the ark of our safety. To him we are all invited. Let us seek shelter now.



SKETCH XLI.

A GREATER THAN SOLOMON.

"A greater than Solomon is here."—LUKE xi. 31.

BECAUSE of the blindness of men's hearts, the reli-

gious teacher has sometimes to adopt a course which seems dictated by pride. The truth has to be set in such light that the hearer cannot mistake it. The speaker may not be at all egotistic; his zeal, and not his pride, may be prompting him. He desires to save souls and honour God; and he sees that in doing this he will have to resort to all legitimate measures, even though he subject himself thereby to the imputation of sordid and selfish motives. Egotism is self where it ought not to be—first. Jesus frequently spoke of himself, and in apparent self-commendation. This was necessary. He has had no equal. The interests of truth required him to take the course he did. Men cannot choose until both sides of a question have been presented to them. In such statements as the text this is done.

Let us first notice the greatness of Solomon, and then show the superiority of Christ.

I. NOTICE THE GREATNESS OF SOLOMON.

Solomon owed his exaltation and glory chiefly, if not entirely, to his wise choice. 1 Kings iii. 3-15. For a summary of his wisdom and prosperity, the eighth and two following chapters of First Kings may be consulted. His greatness is seen,

1. *In his works.*—Among these may be named, (1.) His *moral and religious teachings*. They are found in Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Canticles, and certain prayers and addresses in the Books of Kings and Chronicles. Probably some of his literary productions have perished. 1 Kings iv. 32, 33. Doubtless we possess all his inspired writings.

These evince a profound knowledge of men, manners, morals, and religion. They excel in clear insight, sound judgment, golden counsels, extensive experience, and fervent, enlightened piety. He possessed a capacious mind, which he was careful to store with the choicest learning of his times. (2.) *His civil administration.* He studied human nature well, and gave his subjects the benefit of his knowledge. 1 Kings iii. 16-28. Under his reign the kingdom of Israel rose to its greatest glory. For a long time peace smiled on all the land, and plenty seemed to fill every cup. (3.) *His public undertakings.* The building of the temple occupied seven years, and the erection of his own palace thirteen more. These were among the most magnificent structures the world has seen, and must have required an immense expenditure of money and labour.

2. *In his possessions.*—(1.) *His fame was widespread.* 1 Kings iv. 34; x. 1-13. (2.) *Many kings were his tributaries.* Syria, Moab, Damascus, and Ammon. (3.) *His attendants were very numerous.* It has been computed, from the bill of fare, that there were at his table daily 54,000 persons. 1 Kings iv. 22-28. (4.) *His wealth was abundant.* His annual income was six hundred threescore and six talents of gold, besides gifts in other forms. Dr. A. Clarke reckons the amount at £4,688,675 12s. 8½d. per annum. (5.) *He enjoyed long life.* He reigned in Israel forty years. The latter part of his life was cloudy and troubled.

II. SHOW THE SUPERIORITY OF CHRIST.

This is seen,

1. *In his Person*.—Solomon was a creature defiled by sin. Jesus is all perfection. One part of his nature is truly and properly Divine, and the other came pure from God. Phil. ii. 5-7. Luke i. 35. Power, wisdom, love, mercy, truth, immutability, justice, righteousness, infinity, and eternity belong to him essentially and fully. Col. ii. 9. Rev. i. 8. Heb. xiii. 8.

2. *In his works*.—(1.) As the *Creator and Preserver of all things*. We have but to reflect on the immensity of his nature, and the marvellous character of even its minute parts, to feel impressed with the fact that the Lord is great. Ps. cxi. 2. (2.) As the *Great Teacher*. The instructions proceeding directly from Christ form but a small portion of Scripture. Still they contain sayings which, for suggestiveness, simplicity, and majesty, have never been equalled. Luke x. 29-37; xv. 11-32. Men not at all biassed in his favour were constrained to acknowledge his superiority. Matt. vii. 29. John vii. 46. Further, even the writings of Solomon are Christ's, for they were given by his Spirit. 2 Pet. i. 21. 2 Tim. iii. 16-17. His sayings were confirmed and enforced by miracles. The former was the preaching of words, and the latter the preaching of deeds. (3.) As the *Redeemer of man*. His disinterestedness was so perfect that although he was the highest Being, he submitted to become the servant of all, and be numbered with transgressors. Solomon, in all the dazzle of pre-eminent royalty, is a striking spectacle; but not half so impressive and glorious as Jesus bearing his cross for us. The Saviour is still working. He is recovering the lost, raising the fallen, com-

forting the mourner, and doing everything to build up that magnificent temple of living stones which shall endure in heaven for ever. Eph. ii. 21. 1 Pet. ii. 5.

3. *In his estate.*—As a King he is altogether superior to Solomon. (1.) He has *more extensive dominions*. Earth and heaven are his. Heb. i. 2, 3. Col. i. 15-17. (2.) His is a *higher kind of sovereignty*. He reigns in the hearts and minds of his followers. Isa. xi. 1-9. (3.) His *authority is more complete*. 1 Cor. xv. 25. Rev. xix. 16. (4.) He has a *greater number of subjects*. Phil. ii. 10. Rev. vii. 9-17. (5.) He has *more ample resources of wealth and fame*. Deut. x. 14. 1 Cor. x. 26. (6.) His *empire shall be more durable*. Solomon's is a matter of history now; Christ's is now, and shall be world without end. Dan. vii. 14. 2 Pet. i. 11.

APPLICATION.

1. To the *sinner*.—Fear to grieve one so great as Jesus. Repent, and seek his mercy; for his love is equal to his power and glory.

2. To the *believer*.—Remember, amid all the dangers and trials of earth, that this great Being is your Saviour. Trust in him, and boast of him.

3. To the *Christian teacher*.—Christ is your theme. Do not leave him for something else. Seek to unfold his glorious character, and build up his kingdom in the earth.

SKETCH XLII.

THE HANDFUL OF CORN.

"There shall be an handful of corn in the earth upon the top of the mountains; the fruit thereof shall shake like Lebanon: and they of the city shall flourish like grass of the earth."—PSALM lxxii. 16.

It is commonly reckoned among commentators that this psalm was composed by David on the elevation of Solomon to the throne of his father. The author seems to have been richly endowed with the spirit of prophecy for the occasion. In glowing language, and by divers striking figures, he sets forth the character of his son's reign; but it is generally agreed, among both Jewish and Christian writers, that his vision was not confined to Solomon, but extended to the times of Messiah. Some of the statements in the psalm are true of none other than Christ. The text is understood to be descriptive of his kingdom in its nature, commencement, and success.

We remark,

I. THE GOSPEL MAY BE COMPARED TO CORN.

Because of its,

1. *Vitality*.—Seed contains the element of life, which is so strong, that even after it has slumbered for hundreds of years, it germinates when placed in favourable conditions. All who are brought

under the influence of Gospel truth, are made the possessors of Divine life. John vi. 63.

2. *Productiveness*.—Seed possesses the wonderful property of multiplying itself, in some cases to sixty or a hundredfold. See Dr. A. Clarke on Matt. xiii. 3-8. It is the peculiar characteristic of the Gospel that it ever leads those who believe in it to new and multiplied blessings on earth and in heaven. Prov. iv. 8. 2 Pet. i. 5-8.

3. *Utility*.—Corn gives us bread, which is “the staff of life.” The Gospel furnishes a remedy to every moral malady; gives sustenance to all the powers of the soul; and imparts strength, dignity, and glory to the whole man. John vi. 35.

II. THIS SEED WAS VERY SMALL IN THE BEGINNING.—“An handful.”

Some critics say the reading should be—“A grain of corn,” instead of—“An handful of corn.” No doubt the idea intended to be conveyed is that of something insignificant and unpromising; and which, from its smallness, might be easily lost or overcome. Such, to human eyes, the Gospel certainly appeared at its commencement. The Saviour frequently spoke of his work in conformity with the representation of the text. John xii. 24. Matt. xiii. 31-33. These statements have been borne out by subsequent events. His personal followers were but few, and most of them men of no worldly consideration, but rather objects of contempt and ill-treatment than of reverence or dread. 1 Cor. i. 27-29.

III. THIS HANDFUL OF GOSPEL SEED WAS

PLANTED IN AN UNFAVOURABLE SOIL.—“On the top of the mountains.”

Such a position is most unfriendly to the fructifying of corn, the soil being generally thin, winds cold and cutting, and storms prevalent. In apostolic times there was little that appeared congenial to Gospel truth, but a great deal that was otherwise. The religious orders of the day despised and hated it; civil powers dreaded and persecuted it; and it has always had to contend with the pride and selfishness of man, and the opposition of the devil.

IV. NOTWITHSTANDING THESE DISADVANTAGES, THE GOSPEL DOES AND SHALL FLOURISH GREATLY.—“The fruit thereof shall shake,” &c.

1. *It shall live.*—It is indestructible. God created it for his glory; and it is full of his own Divine energy.

2. *It shall become a mighty power in the world.*—“It shall shake like Lebanon.” Lebanon was famous for its cedars, which, when agitated by strong winds, furnished a striking representation of terror and majesty. The Gospel shall not only survive its unfriendly conditions, but shall thrive and produce much fruit; nay, the very things which threatened to impede its growth shall illustrate its power. And when it has become the tall cedar of Lebanon, the mountain, formerly unfavourable to it, shall exhibit its greatness. The earthen vessel shall show the power to be of God.

3. *Under its influence the people shall prosper abundantly.*—“They of the city,” &c. It shall do more than make for itself a place; it shall spread everywhere; and further, wherever it goes, it shall

carry with it all that tends to human prosperity and greatness. Isa. xi. 8-9; lv. 10-13; lx.

APPLICATION.

This subject furnishes the Christian with,

1. An instructive view of the *Divine wisdom*.—God does not work as men work.
2. Encouragement to *trust* in the *Divine faithfulness* and *power*.—What he purposes he will bring to pass.
3. A *motive to work* for the *Divine honour*.—Not only will you succeed, but your success will be for the establishment of God's authority in the earth, and for the benefit of your fellow-men.

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SKETCH XLIII.

PRESENT AND FUTURE.

"What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter."—JOHN xiii. 7.

In the narrative to which the text belongs, our Lord is teaching the disciples humility. He had frequently taught it by precept; but here he does it by example. Peter did not understand the Saviour's intention. There is much in the Divine procedure that is perplexing. Some of this will be explained in time, and the rest in eternity.

Let us consider the works of Christ; the wonder of the disciples; and the explanations of the future.

I. THE WORKS OF CHRIST.

On one occasion Jesus said, "My Father work-eth hitherto, and I work," John v. 17. His works are found,

1. *In creation.*—He brought order out of chaos; created the light; filled earth, air, and sea with their countless living tenants; and produced all the starry worlds. The sun, which shone on the first cradle, and will shine on the last grave, was formed by him. He gave the dew-drop its purity, the flowers their beauty and fragrance, and man all his wonderful instincts and faculties. John i. 3. Col. i. 16. Heb. i. 2, 10.

2. *In revelation.*—The Bible is his. Its spoken and written truths were once the hidden thoughts of the Divine mind. It is very interesting and instructive to trace the development of these truths; to listen to the first promise; to sit with Abraham in the plain of Mamre; to hearken to the words of help issuing from the burning bush; and to follow Jesus and his witnesses until they give us a finished Bible.

3. *In redemption.*—This is his in a peculiar sense. Luke ix. 31. His death laid the foundation of hope for a sinking world. It was the ransom price of an enslaved race. 1 Pet. i. 18. It was a peace-maker. Col. i. 20. He has published the economy of mercy. He pleads his people's cause in heaven. He pours out the Holy Spirit on earth. He is "all, and in all," Col. iii. 11.

4. *In providence.*—Providence is his form of government. Col. i. 17. It embraces the material, the moral, and the spiritual. Jesus has declared himself to be the Governor of the world, the

Avenger of wrong, and the Protector of right. He however does not in this life either fully reward the righteous or fully punish the wicked. We must not on this ground question his wisdom, power, justice, faithfulness, and grace. "The Lord reigneth." He holds the elements of nature in his hands. He can give sleep to Peter in prison, or withhold it from the Persian monarch in his royal palace. He can have Mordecai honoured, and Haman hanged. We should carefully guard against judging of men's character by their circumstances. We must never attempt to take the helm of the world from the hand of the All-wise Ruler.

II. THE WONDER OF THE DISCIPLES.

Peter thought his Lord was about to do some unbecoming thing, when he proposed to wash his disciples' feet. There are many things in the works and ways of God that are too high for us. Creation is full of marvels. Revelation has its "things hard to be understood." Redemption contains wonders into which "the angels desired to look." Providence has mysteries that are "past finding out." Perhaps men are most frequently and painfully exercised by the last named. The author of Psalm lxxiii. seems to have felt them. We are pressed with them on every side. If creature-lips might question the Almighty, we should ask, Why does the usurper revel in luxury, and the righteous die in the flames of martyrdom? Why does merit languish in neglect, and worthlessness riot in the world's richest honours? Why have the good to seek redress at the hands of the sinful? Why are God's servants so often removed before their work

seems half done? Why is the path of the saint so circuitous and chequered—from garden to desert, from Pisgah to the valley of the shadow of death, from the bright home to the cold and cheerless grave? Why is the father of the dependant cut off in the prime of life, while the afflicted grandsire seeks death in vain?

We should recollect that there are many invisible links in the chain of providence. God designs to show us our nothingness and his own greatness. Though he employs instruments, he does not need them. Earth is our scene of probation. We have to learn to suffer, trust, and obey. Our heavenly Father sometimes breaks the vessel, to bring us to the fountain, that we may not rely on the transitory, but on the everlasting.

III. THE EXPLANATIONS OF THE FUTURE.— “Thou shalt,” &c.

These words have been as balm to the wounded hearts of thousands. Although they were uttered for a special purpose, they contain a general truth. We remark,

1. *The hereafter of time explains much.*—Peter soon got to know the meaning of the Saviour's act of washing the disciples' feet. God frequently rewards and honours, in this life, the faith he has tried and proved. Jacob, in time of famine, went down into Egypt, to eat the corn his long-lost son had provided. Ezekiel was favoured with the visions of God when among the captives on the river of Chebar. John in exile had brighter views of heaven than John leaning on his Master's bosom.

2. *The hereafter of eternity will explain all the rest.*

—Heaven is the world of knowledge and light. Everything good for the saint will be within reach. Doubtless Adam will understand the mystery of human defection; Abraham will see why he was commanded to offer up Isaac; Job will know the blessedness of enduring temptation; and the martyrs will see the meaning of their "great tribulation." Thus God's ways will be understood, and the cords which bind his creatures to him will be greatly multiplied and strengthened.

APPLICATION.

1. *To the believer.*—Amid the trials and perplexities of this life, exercise patience, faith, and hope. God is over all. Rejoice in what the future is to bring.

2. *To the sinner.*—Let this subject remind you of your hereafter. The future will reveal the full cup of God's wrath. Repent now, and avert that doom.



SKETCH XLIV.

GOD'S WORD AND MAN'S DREAMS.

"The prophet that hath a dream, let him tell a dream; and he that hath my word, let him speak my word faithfully. What is the chaff to the wheat? saith the Lord."—JEREMIAH. xxiii. 28.

God having granted to the world a revelation of his will, in which the highest interests of man are

involved, it must be apparent to all thinking minds that it is of the utmost importance that that revelation be dealt with in an intelligent and faithful manner. The speculations and fancies of men should not be mixed with the truths of the Gospel. The latter constitute the "sure word of prophecy" which God has given us; and which has a province peculiarly its own—namely, that of bringing "life and immortality to light," and leading us to salvation by faith in its Author.

The propriety of these observations is established by various portions of Scripture, of which the text is one. In it we find a direction, a command, and a contrast. Let us notice,

I. THE DIRECTION TO THE DREAMER.—"Let him that hath a dream," &c.

Consider,

1. *The nature of dreams.*—They may be, (1.) *Human.* They may, and no doubt do, often originate in a deranged body or mind, caused by toil, disease, or care. Eccl. v. 3. The mind's long contemplation of some cherished object is sometimes thought to produce them. (2.) *Satanic.* Satan being ever ready for any work that will favour his diabolical purposes, doubtless makes use of dreams as an agency, by working upon the imagination of the sleeper, and by stirring up impostors to pretend to revelations received in the night season. Moses cautioned the people of Israel against the latter. Deut. xiii. 1-3. (3.) *Divine.* For the accomplishment of his special purposes, the Almighty has sometimes made use of dreams. Jacob. Gen. xxviii. 10-15. Joseph. Gen. xxxvii.

8-10. Pharaoh. Gen. xli. 1-7. Nebuchadnezzar. Dan. ii. 1.

2. *The way in which dreams are to be dealt with.*—“Let him tell a dream.” False prophets frequently delivered their lucubrations as the product of Divine visions. They had an evil purpose to accomplish, and to give it a better appearance, with the view of the more readily achieving it, they hesitated not to claim for themselves the sanction of the Almighty. Mormonism in modern times, as well as false prophets in Bible ages, furnishes examples of such procedure. The text gives instruction to the dreamer that he is to claim no more for his production than what belongs to a dream.

II. THE COMMAND TO THE STEWARD OF DIVINE TRUTH.—“He that hath my word,” &c.

1. *The method by which God's word has come to man.*—It was, (1.) *Imparted by inspiration.* The Scriptures claim this for themselves. 2 Tim. iii. 16, 17. And it seems natural to suppose that fallible men, writing on Divine subjects, would require Divine guidance and instruction in their work. (2.) *Embodied in written revelation.* The convenience of the church and the security of the Scriptures demanded that the inspired thoughts of these heaven-taught men should be written in a book. (3.) *Preserved by Divine care.* The Bible is the oldest book, as well as the best; and while nearly all contemporary literature has perished, it, notwithstanding its destruction has been more diligently sought, is preserved in its integrity. How are we to account for this fact, but by sup-

posing that the same supernatural power which gave it has preserved it?

2. *The manner in which God's word should be handled by man.*—"Faithfully." It should be, (1.) *Openly*. 2 Cor. iv. 2. Whenever the effort is made to bend the word of God to human creeds, it is necessary to resort to some measure or other of craft and cunning. (2.) *Purely*. In order to make the Gospel pleasing to the flesh, or to harmonize with the conceits of vain philosophy, men sometimes adulterate it with human mixtures. Matt. xv. 6. 1 Tim. i. 4. (3.) *Pointedly*. We have an example of pointed preaching in the case of the prophet Nathan delivering the message of God to David. 2 Sam. xii. 1-12. Another in the case of Paul reasoning with Felix. Acts xxiv. 25. (4.) *Fully*. If even propriety did not suggest such a method of using the Gospel, Scripture teaches it. Acts xx. 26, 27. 2 Tim. ii. 15, 16.

III. THE CONTRAST BETWEEN HUMAN FANCIES AND THE DIVINE WORD.—"What is the chaff to the wheat?"

1. *The chaff.*—It is, (1.) *Light*. The commodities of the dream-teller may amuse, but not profit. (2.) *Dead*. Chaff has no vitality in it. The visionary fancies of the false prophet and the deluded enthusiast are destitute of power to enliven and sanctify the soul. (3.) *Worthless*. Working no real and permanent changes in individual or social life, they are of no value to the world; and therefore may be trodden under foot of men. (4.) *Offensive*. The tendency of these vain fancies is to mislead and degrade, and to create a distaste for sober re-

fection and the wholesome and indispensable truths of revelation. Abundant evidence on this point may be met with in daily intercourse with the lower orders of society.

2. *The wheat*.—It is, (1.) *Substantial*. God's truth is certain and tangible. It is the reverse of the old wives' fables in which religious deluders generally deal. It can be felt and enjoyed. (2.) *Full of vitality*. To endure and augment. The Gospel is quick and powerful. It shall triumph. (3.) *Precious*. Wheat gives us our principal article of food. The word of the Lord is valuable. *Psa. xix. 7-11*. Its promises are rich in the comfort they yield. Its precepts are of vast importance to the world, being the soundest ever taught. Its information is the most momentous. Its results in connection with human conduct, enjoyment, and destiny are most solemn and glorious.

APPLICATION.

1. Let us beware of the visionary. In it are delusions, cunning, and lies. Often coming from hell, it as often leads to hell.

2. Give heed to the true. It will give the assurance of safety while followed, and will save from unavailing regret in eternity.

SKETCH XLV.

SELF-CONSECRATION.

"Yield yourselves unto the Lord."—2 CHRONICLES xxx. 8.

WHEN these words were written, the church was just awaking from a long slumber. Hezekiah had produced a pleasing change among his subjects. In the first month of his reign, he revived the temple service. Having cleansed the house of the Lord, reorganized the priesthood, and made suitable preparations for the observance of the Pass-over, he sent letters of invitation to the remnant of the ten tribes who had not been carried away into Assyria, in which he expressed his conviction that if they would return unto God, he would return unto them; referred to the calamities which had befallen their fathers; and entreated them not to be stiff-necked as they were, but yield themselves unto the Lord.

Severing the text from its connection, we shall consider the sentiments it embodies in their application to ourselves. Notice,

I. WHAT IS TAUGHT BY THE COURSE RECOMMENDED.—"Yield yourselves,"—*Marg.*, "Give the hand." Here we have,

1. *A solemn agreement.*—The custom of giving the hand was common in former times. 2 Kings x. 15. Ezra x. 19. Jer. l. 15. Lam. v. 6. Ezek.

xvii. 16. It prevails at the present day. By this act bargains are confirmed and engagements ratified. In pledging themselves to a certain course, persons often take hold of each other's hand, indicating that they mean to adhere to their agreement. When you are exhorted to give your hand to the Lord, the meaning is: Join yourselves unto him in a solemn covenant. "He is a covenant-making and a covenant-keeping God." If you take him for your Sovereign, he will take you for his subjects—to make you the objects of his love; give you his protection; employ you in his service; supply your needs; and afterward receive you to glory.

2. *Sincere friendship*.—Giving the hand to another is a token of union. Jehu once said to Jehonadab, "Is thine heart right," &c., 2 Kings x. 15. Between sinners and God there exists no proper union. Sin has created a deep chasm between the two. How shall the chasm be filled? How can the enmity of the carnal mind be destroyed? How is friendly intercourse to be restored? God has done all that he can for this purpose. He has sent his Son to close the gulf, and destroy the enmity; his Holy Spirit to convince men of their need; and his ambassadors to beseech men to be reconciled; and is saying to you, "Do your part; yield yourselves unto me."

3. *Complete consecration*.—You cannot literally give God your hand; and yet by joining yourselves to him and his people you can virtually do so. By public profession of attachment to him, you can declare yourselves his—his worshippers, witnesses, and friends. You can do it by placing your all at his disposal; by allowing your warmest thoughts,

noblest aspirations, most fervent desires, and holiest purposes to go out after him.

II. HOW THIS COURSE IS TO BE TAKEN.

You must "yield yourselves unto the Lord,"

1. *By repentance.*—Genuine repentance is something more than an occasional pang of remorse, or a tear of vexation: it is a deep and abiding conviction of innate depravity and actual transgression; a sincere hatred of evil; and a firm resolution to forsake sin, and obey God.

2. *By faith in God.*—In the statements of his word, (1.) Concerning *himself*. That he is love. (2.) Concerning *Christ*. That he is the only medium through which you can share God's love. (3.) Concerning *your own condition*. That you do not deserve the least manifestation of his love.

This should be done,

1. *Freely.*—There must be the concurrence of your will and judgment. God requires all to be done for him with a ready mind.

2. *Fully.*—You must have a conviction that God deserves all you have and are, and that it is a sin to withhold anything from him. 1 Cor. vi. 19, 20.

3. *Gladly.*—Because, (1.) The *covenant* you are about to make will bring you *great and lasting good*. (2.) You are entering into fellowship with *One* whose *kind regard* you need *more* than that of *any other being*. (3.) This Friend will *ever remain true* to you. He will be your Shield and Strength, your Comforter and Guide, your Saviour and God.

4. *Promptly.*—Time is short; life is uncertain; the interests are momentous; difficulties will multiply.

III. WHY YOU SHOULD ADOPT THE COURSE UNDER CONSIDERATION.

Because,

1. *God desires it.*—He asks for the devout adoration of your heart. Not for his own sake, but for yours.

2. *God has a claim upon you for it.*—(1.) As your *Creator*. He called you into existence, that you might glorify him. (2.) As your *Sustainer*. He gives you all the blessings you enjoy. (3.) As your *Saviour*. He has originated and perfected the plan by which you may be delivered from sin and hell. (4.) As your *Sovereign*. He is your God, and he will never relinquish his claims. To him you owe allegiance; and if you withhold it, you do an injustice. You will destroy your own souls, and rob your Maker.

3. *It involves your happiness.* Between the faithful performance of duty and true enjoyment there is a certain and permanent connection.

4. *It involves your safety for both worlds.*—"The path of duty is the path of safety." If you neglect duty, you are sure to bring destruction on yourselves, and perhaps on others also. Then, for the sake of others, who are sure to be influenced by your example, and for your own sakes, that you may be in a safe position, adopt the course recommended in the text.

APPLICATION.

Friend, have you performed this duty? Perhaps you are saying, I have no power. He who bids you do the duty, gives you strength. Give your hand, your heart, yourself to the Lord now.



SKETCH XLVI.

WEARY OF WORKING FOR GOD.

"Be not weary in well-doing."—2 THESSALONIANS iii. 13.

THE best paid and most honourable labour is that done for God. No employment is so congenial to the good man's tastes. No being has such claims upon man's services as the Almighty. Yet notwithstanding these powerful considerations, Christians are apt to relinquish their work for the Lord; and it has been found necessary to address to them admonitions similar to that of the text.

In considering the one before us, we observe that Christian labour is well doing; that Christian labourers sometimes become weary in well doing; that to become weary in well doing is an act of dereliction.

I. THAT CHRISTIAN LABOUR IS WELL DOING.

Christian labour is the duty and privilege of all believers; and that it is worthy the appellation of "well doing" will appear when we consider that,

1. *By it the highest interests of man are promoted.*—It is, (1.) An instrument for effecting the *salvation* of the *soul*. Acts xvi. 17. 1 Cor. i. 21. To attain this is a main object of well doing. (2.) A means of *informing the mind*. As to Doctrines. Duties. Privileges. Responsibilities. Prospects. It should be the special aim of the Christian labourer

to instruct. Col. i. 9. (3.) An aid in the *government* of the *heart* and the *direction* of the *life*. It aims at encouraging the fearful. Strengthening the weak. Succouring the tempted. Confirming the wavering. Directing the perplexed. Reproving the sinful. It had a beneficial effect even upon Herod. Mar. vi. 20.

2. *By it the Divine purpose in reference to the believer is accomplished.*—God has been pleased to ordain that he shall be the instrument of saving his fellow-men. Hence he called the apostles, and instituted the ministry. And when the Christian warns men of sin, informs them of its fatal consequences, points them to the Saviour, and urges them to flee to him for salvation, he is acting in harmony with the Divine will concerning him.

3. *By it the glory of God is advanced.*—No labour for the Lord can possibly be in vain; and when it is engaged in, (1.) The *authority* of God is honoured. In the very act of obeying his call. (2.) The *power* of God is seen. In removing obstacles, and speeding his work. 1 Cor. i. 18-24. (3.) The *grace* of God is magnified. In the conversion of sinners and the establishment of believers.

II. THAT CHRISTIAN LABOURERS SOMETIMES BECOME WEARY IN WELL DOING.

The *signs* of this evil may be mentioned as,

1. *A disrelish for devotional engagements.*—Perhaps a love for the ordinances of God has much to do with not merely all personal piety, but all successful Christian labour.

2. *An unpunctual and indifferent discharge of Christian duty.*—The slightest matter becomes an excuse for its neglect, and such a spirit actuates the la-

bourer as proclaims that his heart has ceased to be in his work.

3. *A parsimonious spirit in the support of God's cause.*—When one formerly disposed to liberality in it begins to give niggardly, he furnishes evidence of a diminution of interest in its progress.

4. *A readiness to offer excuses for the abridgment of former active labours.*—It is alleged that time is limited; that business increases; that engagements multiply; that health fails, while there is sufficient to be increasingly busy in secular employments; that some one has said or done something (generally trifling) at which offence is taken.

5. *An entire discontinuance of useful Christian employments.*—The office is given up; the name no longer appears publicly in connection with the church; and the presence of the former active labourer is now only to be counted on as a member of "the great congregation"—and that not so regularly as formerly.

The causes of this evil may be,

1. *Loss of personal religion.*—Unless there be some powerful sinister inducement—as of wealth or fame—he who loses "the pearl of great price" will not engage in such employment as has for its object the putting of others in possession of it. Backsliders often labour hard to hinder, but very rarely to further, religion.

2. *Indulgence of the flesh.*—Particularly, (1.) *A love of wealth.* There is no reason why it should be so, but it frequently appears as if it were the case, that poverty is more favourable to well doing than affluence; for many, on becoming rich, seem
 'he church needs their labours no long-

ger, and that God has freed them from obligation. (2.) A love of *ease*. Long journeys, frequent exposure, homely fare, blunt reception, and violent opposition clash with the rest, quiet, and respectability so pleasant to human nature.

3. *Entertaining groundless fears*.—Of meagre abilities; over-critical spectators; failure in efficient performance of duty; want of success.

4. *Unwarrantable reliance upon past prosperity*.—It is sometimes argued that the difficulties of organization being surmounted, there may be some relaxation of effort; and when such relaxation is indulged in, it is almost sure to be followed by slothfulness and indifference, if not by entire cessation.

III. THAT TO BECOME WEARY IN WELL DOING IS AN ACT OF CHRISTIAN DERELICTION.

It exhibits,

1. *Ingratitude*.—When God has done for us infinitely more than we can possibly do for his cause, to cease to give him the little service we can render, is to evince a disposition lamentably deficient in thankfulness.

2. *Indifference to the Divine call*.—God said to the once diligent and loving labourer, "Son, go work in my vineyard;" and he never yet withdrew that call: it is still in force. But that same labourer has become one of those concerning whom it may be said that, though he made the ready reply, "I go, sir," it must now be said of him, in view of his more recent conduct, that he "went not."

3. *A violation of former vows*.—Solemn pledges to Jehovah, made under a deep sense of inability, at

the commencement of labours in his cause, are violated. What a crime!

4. *A disregard of personal advantage.*—In, (1.) Foregoing the *sweets* of labour for God. (2.) Forfeiting the *reward* due to former labours. (3.) Experiencing *bitter regret*. (4.) Procuring the *Divine frown*.

IMPROVEMENT.

Learn,

1. The great importance of work for God. It is well doing—nay, the *best* doing.

2. The necessity for dependance upon the Holy Spirit. Without its aid, you will become weary.

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SKETCH XLVII.

PRAYER FOR THE CHURCH.

“Save thy people, and bless thine inheritance: feed them also, and lift them up for ever.”—PSALM xxviii. 9.

THE human heart is in constant pursuit of happiness. From the nature of the efforts which a person makes to realize his objects, we may determine the state of his soul. The unrenewed generally seek their pleasure in dry channels or polluted streams. The good find full satisfaction in God. This is obtained by prayer. Nor are their prayers confined to themselves. They are blessed with *ed* benevolence; and make supplication

for all men, but especially for the church of God, —often crying, "Save thy people," &c.

In considering the text, let us notice,

I. THE RELATIONSHIP WHICH THE GOOD SUSTAIN TO GOD.—"Thy people," &c.

1. *They are his people.*—He has, (1.) *Redeemed* them. (2.) *Renewed* them. (3.) *Adopted* them. (4.) *Always taken care* of them. (5.) *Engaged to bring them to heaven.*

2. *They are his inheritance.*—From this figure, we infer, (1.) *Ownership.* He has not received this inheritance from another. (2.) *Care.* He cultivates it. He guards it. Isa. v. 1, 2. (3.) *Delight.* Men take pleasure in their possessions. God delights in his people. They are precious in his sight. Mal. iii. 16, 17. (4.) *Fruitfulness.* Man expects his inheritance to yield produce. God looks for fruit from his church. Isa. v. 7. *Worship* should be rendered, and efforts put forth to extend his cause. Psal. l. 14.

II. THE PRAYER PRESENTED TO GOD ON BEHALF OF THE GOOD.—"Save," &c.

The psalmist prays for the Lord,

1. *To save his people.*—This supposes that believers are exposed to danger. Such is the fact. They need saving from, (1.) *The temptations of Satan.* These are frequent and determined. 1 Pet. v. 8. (2.) *The persecutions of ungodly men.* (3.) *The distracting cares of the world.* (4.) *Doubts of the Divine faithfulness and ability to help.*

2. *To bless his people.*—God is full of all riches.

He can bless his people with an increase of knowledge, grace, power, consolation, and prosperity.

3. *To feed his people.*—By food life is sustained. We are taught to ask God for daily bread. But the soul needs feeding, as well as the body. Food suitable for it is furnished in the Gospel. Every want has been provided for. We must have recourse to the ordinances of religion, reading, prayer, meditation, pious conversation, and public worship. The marginal reading is "rule." The idea appears to be that of a shepherd, who supplies and governs his flock.

4. *To lift his people up for ever.*—It is God's purpose to exalt his church. He does this by raising the minds of his followers above the world; extending their influence; and increasing their number. He will finally raise them to a better and brighter world. This will be indeed a lifting up for ever.

Such, then, is the prayer of the text; and from the declarations of God's word respecting the church, we may rest assured it will be answered. Deut. xxxii. 43. Heb. xiii. 5. Ps. xxix. 11.

APPLICATION.

1. Let us cultivate the psalmist's spirit.
2. Let us expect answers to our prayers.
3. Let us take heart, because others are praying for us.



SKETCH XLVIII.

THE MINISTERING OF CHRIST.

"Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many."—**MATTHEW XX. 28.**

THE variety of character exhibited by the disciples furnished the Saviour with frequent opportunities for enforcing important lessons. Blinded by an error of the Jews, they cherished their plans and purposes for the coming grandeur of Christ's kingdom. It was under the influence of ambitious feeling that two of the disciples sought to obtain for themselves the foremost places in the fondly-dreamed-of temporal kingdom of the Messiah. Seizing the opportunity, the Saviour seeks to dissipate their error, and inculcate another spirit; teaching them that to become great, they must be humble. As a practical enforcement of this teaching, he instances his own example.

The text indicates the particulars and purposes of Christ's humiliation.

I. THE PARTICULARS OF CHRIST'S HUMILIATION.

These are set forth in the text as,

1. *The title he assumed.*—"The Son of man." Christ's frequent adoption of this appellation may be suggestive of the delight with which he identified himself with the family of man. It implies,

(1.) His *abdication of regal dignity and glory*. As the Son of God, he had an eternal and glorious existence. He came from where his throne was highest and brightest—from where angels mighty in power and praise were his servants. (2.) The *assumption of human weakness and suffering*. He might have assumed that nature in its maturity, but he took it in its frailest and feeblest form.

2. *The comforts and honours he despised*.—"Came not to be ministered unto." He became a poor and humble man. He might have elected to take rank amongst the proudest of earth's noble ones. The diadem, the crown of universal honour, the pomp and power of state, lay as much within his reach as poverty and dishonour; but the former he despised. He rejected many creature comforts, and had to say, "The foxes have holes," &c.

3. *The offices he undertook*.—"To minister." To minister is to serve; and Christ, in becoming man, became not only obedient to God, but the servant of men. This ministering was, (1.) Exercised upon *humble objects*. Whilst no voice of supplication passed him unheeded, he sought out those despised and destitute ones from whom no reward could come, and with whom it was a reproach even to associate, as the proper objects of his service. (2.) Oftimes *humiliating* in its character. See him at the feet of the fishermen. John xiii. 4, 5. And although careless of his own bodily ease and comfort, he was most solicitous for the health and happiness of others.

4. *The death he died*.—"He gave his life." It was, (1.) *Unmerited*. Pilate found him blameless. But a higher Judge and a holier law than his pro-

nounced him guiltless, and must have let him pass unscathed by sickness and untouched by death. (2.) *Reproachful*. It was such as is reserved for the lowest criminals; and in his case there were added the derisions of enemies, and the pain of outraged feeling and insulted innocence.

"He *came* to give his life."—It was all known to him beforehand.

"He *came* to *give* his life."—By no act did he compromise his freedom. He suffered by his own will. "He offered himself"—at once Priest and Victim.

II. THE PURPOSES OF CHRIST'S HUMILIATION.

These were,

1. *To minister*.—In his ministering, as set forth in the text, he teaches, (1.) *Self-denial*. For the good of others—and those his enemies—he gave up his place in glory, and became "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief." (2.) *Humility*. Although possessed of infinite greatness, he "humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross."

2. *To ransom*.—The sufferings of his life are to be regarded as an example; but his death cannot be viewed in this light merely. Nothing but the idea of his sufferings being vicarious can explain the circumstances of his death. Ransom implies *previous condemnation*. The "many" were under the curse of a broken law. This condemnation was just. Terrible. Irrevocable. It implies also *previous enslavement*. Cursed by sin, the souls of men had become enslaved to sin. This ransom was, (1.) *Sufficient*. It was the price demanded by

the justice of God, and provided by his merey, The resurrection of Christ is a proof that his atonement was accepted by God. (2.) For *all men*. "For many" must not be regarded as exclusive of some, but as inclusive of all. The terms "many" and "all" were synonymous in Jewish ears, and in Scripture are often used interchangeably. Thus we read:—"Many that sleep in the dust shall arise." "All that sleep in the grave shall arise." "Through the offence of one many died." "In Adam all die." And when it is distinctly stated, "He, by the grace of God, tasted death for every man," the conclusion is clear that the death of Christ was a ransom for all.

APPLICATION.

1. As sinners, have we availed ourselves of the benefits of Christ's atonement?

2. As free in Christ, we should set before us his humiliation as the object of gratitude. Assurance. Emulation.

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